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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

SPACES FOR DEMOCRACY: SOCIAL LEARNING WITHIN A WOMEN'S COLLECTIVE

by

MARGO SCHMITT-BOSHNICK ©

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and
Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Education

in

Adult and Higher Education

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL POLICY STUDIES

EDMONTON, ALBERTA
SPRING, 1996

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FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled **Spaces For Democracy: Social Learning Within A Women's Collective** submitted by Margo Schmitt-Boshnick in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education in Adult and Higher Education.

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Date April 10, 1996

DEDICATION

To Rod,
who shares my love of learning,
and without whose love, encouragement, and support
this thesis would not have been possible.

ABSTRACT

Adult education occurs in a diverse range of contexts. The recent emphasis within the field, however, has been on institutionalized settings. Critical forms of adult education that involve the self-determination of individuals and groups through critical reflection, dialogue and action are being pushed to the edges of the field. Adult education occurs within civil society, which is the cultural realm where we dialogically determine our identities, values and beliefs. There are fewer spaces for discourse and self-determination in civil society because of the intrusions by the economic and political systems. Critical adult educators wish to contribute to the defense of these public spaces by understanding the social learning processes that occur in dialogical communities. This research contributes to the cause by investigating a low income women's collective.

A case study approach was used in this study. Two themes emerged that explicate social learning, including learning and action, and support and identity in collectivity. Leadership, external influences, power, and exclusion are issues that affect social learning. The issue of citizenship for low income women is discussed as well.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Overview of the Question

Adult education is a field of study characterized by a rich diversity of contexts. They range from formalized and accredited programs in post-secondary institutions, to gardening programs offered by community associations, to informal grassroots movements concerned with social change. Although the historical roots of adult education have emerged from a community-based context, the emphasis within the field is being increasingly placed upon institutionalized situations and the formalization and accreditation that accompany it (Collins, 1991). Much of the research and study within the field has been and continues to be on institutionalized adult education and away from the struggles and concerns of everyday life. The dominant disciplinary orientation has been psychological, which focuses on the individual learner, and has little regard for learners' relationships to others in a social world (Collins, 1991; Plumb, 1994, Welton, 1993, 1995). For those adult educators concerned about the educational processes that occur outside of formalized contexts, particularly in the development of skills of citizenship and the importance of learning collectively for social change, these trends are most disturbing. Those working in this vein are continually pushed farther to the edges of the field. The momentum of these trends makes it increasingly difficult for adult educators working outside of the mainstream to prevent and reverse their marginalization. One method of countering this trend, though, has been the recent outpouring of writings within the field outlining the problem. Although this has created a voice and debate among academics who have been theorizing the issues, there has also been a call for research to be carried out in the peripheral areas of adult education. This thesis contributes to this effort by examining the social learning processes within a women's collective.

Critical Forms of Adult Education

The adult educators concerned about the marginalization of noninstitutionalized adult education are primarily those who adhere to a critical theoretical orientation. They include critical adult educators who engage with the critical theory of Habermas, (Collins, 1991, 1995; Plumb, 1994, Welton, 1991, 1993, 1995) and feminist educators who share similar ideas about an emancipatory theory and practice, but have concerns about the male centered nature of much of social theory. They include feminist adult educators such as Hart (1992, 1995) who draw upon a socialist feminist perspective. This perspective engages with critical theory but goes beyond it in revealing its patriarchal undergirdings and responds to the issues and concerns that women experience in developing their agency. Beyond the socialist feminists, there are feminist adult educators who draw upon the postmodern feminist perspective (Lather 1991a, 1991b, 1992; Luke and Gore, 1992). This perspective pursues the emancipatory potential within postmodern theory and expands upon what critical theory can provide. One example is Yeatman (1994), who states that the ideals of modernity, that critical theorists are working towards, are not abandoned in postmodern thought, but deconstructed:

> ...a postmodern emancipatory politics does not abandon the values of modern universalism and rationalism, but enters into a deconstructive relationship to them. This is an important point to grasp, since so many have taken postmodernism *tout court* to entail such an abandonment.
> (Yeatman, 1994, p. vii)

The poststructuralist feminists have embraced postmodernist theory as well, but do not accept the ideas of fragmentation that would make emancipation impossible. Lather (1992a) is instructive here:

> In an especially important move, feminist postmodernism refuses both Althusser's "process without a subject" and poststructuralism's fractured, fragmented subject. Neither the romanticized individual nor the pawn of social determinants, the subject of contemporary feminism is theorized in ways that offer hope for sustained contestation and resistance. (p. 131)

All these theorists, whether working within critical, feminist, postmodern or some combination, work from an emancipatory point of departure.

Civil Society

The trends that critical adult educators are calling attention to are not confined to the field of adult education. Rather, they are symptoms of problems within the larger social world. Adult education takes place within the cultural realm of society. This is the sphere where identities, beliefs and values are formed and communicated. It is the realm between the economic sphere and the political or state sphere and is referred to as civil society. Cohen and Arato (1992) provide a definition of this realm:

> "...a sphere of social interation between economy and state, composed above all of the intimate sphere (especially the family), the sphere of associations (especially voluntary associations), social movements, and forms of public communication. (p. ix)

Civil society, then, encompasses social movements, forms of mass media and communication, familial and associational life. The trends that occur within adult education coincide with the intrusions into civil society by the economic and political systems. There is less emphasis on a form of adult education that involves the intersubjective means of developing beliefs and values because there is less emphasis upon discourse and action within civil society in general. The economic and political spheres of a capitalist system are designed for efficiency and effectiveness, and they provide us with ready-made identities, values and beliefs. This means that we can avoid the difficult process of developing them ourselves (Briton and Plumb, 1993). The more that we accept the pre-fabricated ideas of who we are and how we should live, the more successful the economic and political systems of capitalism will be in their encroachment on civil society. As these systems gain momentum and their requirements become larger, their intrusions into and erosion of civil society will continue. The danger is that little room will be left for individuals, families and communities to identify and express their own needs and issues and collectively find solutions. With each intrusion the space for people to come together, to think and act collectively is eroded. This works well for capitalism as collective action is both messy and dangerous and upsets the efficiency applecart. The more civil society is made to serve the interests of the economic and political systems, the more it is eroded by them. Thus, civil society becomes subordinated to these other spheres.

Social Learning Processes

Social learning is one means of overcoming the erosion of civil society. It has been identified by Cohen and Arato (1992) in their theory of civil society and of social movements, and by a number of critical adult educators (Collins 1995; Plumb 1995, Welton 1993, 1995). Although no one provides a straightforward definition of social learning, one can glean threads of what it consists of from Welton (1995). He develops the foundations for a social learning paradigm which he states "would construct the boundary of the field as wide as society itself, and would include everything that forms the outlook, character, and actions of communicative agents in space and time" (p. 134). He draws upon Habermas's theories of the dualistic split between system and lifeworld, and of communicative rationality in setting the boundaries for understanding social learning. Welton's (1995) idea of social learning involves gaining an understanding of the institutions in society and the ways in which they shape our character and identity. It also involves emancipation from those institutions that block human and collective development. Dialogue is the fundamental means of understanding the world, and identifying new ways of conceptualizing it. The development of democratic capacities is also a necessary element within a social learning process. Based on the this literature, the following definition serves to ground this study:

> The social learning process is an educative process concerned with gaining an understanding of the social world and how it influences the formation of character and identity. It involves the development of democratic ways of working in an effort to contribute to the social order and to understand and change oppressive social conditions for oneself and others. It occurs in collectivity and is fundamentally a dialogical process involving critical reflection and action. It is for both individual and collective benefit and advancement.

This definition of social learning appears to be very similar to definitions of empowerment or emancipation. All three concepts involve understanding oppressive social forms and institutions, and the development of the actor in overcoming the oppression. What is different is that Welton, in his idea of the social learning paradigm, appears to include the entire social world, not strictly those social forms or institutions that are oppressive. Social learning processes include emancipation and empowerment, but go beyond to address non-oppressive institutions. Second, there has been a great deal written about emancipation and empowerment, and social learning and its connection to the institutions within civil society may provide us with a different way of exploring and interpreting hegemony, and the means to overcome it. It is a different frame of reference for examining, and hopefully deepening our understanding of, the ways in which we form and transform our identities, beliefs and values.

Question Statement

This thesis will examine the connection between adult education and civil society, through an analysis of appropriate literature as applied to a sociological case study. It will attempt to look to those spaces where social learning is still occurring and shed light on critical adult education's role in countering the colonizing forces of the economic and political systems. The research will provide a discussion and analysis of some of the theory that relates to this issue, and then investigate a women's collective. The intent is to examine and to interpret what is occurring within the collective in terms of social learning processes and determine the theoretical implications.

The research question is:

What can we learn about social learning processes within a women's collective that will contribute to an understanding of critical adult education's role in the defense of civil society?

Assumptions

As discussed, critical adult educators come from a variety of theoretical orientations. As such, the assumptions that they hold are quite different from critical theory, although their basic assumptions about the need to overcome oppression are not. As this thesis uses the critical theory of Habermas as the initial point of departure for understanding the educational process within a women's collective, it is necessary to provide an overview of the assumptions of critical theory.

The first assumption is that relations of domination exist within the world, and the oppression that results from these relations needs to be overcome. Lather (1991b) quotes Poster (1989) in describing the basic tenet of critical theory:

> Critical theory springs from an assumption that we live amid a world of pain, that much can be done to alleviate that pain, and that theory has a crucial role to play in that process (p. 3).

Welton (1995), in providing a definition of critical theory sees that the pain that Poster (1989) refers to is caused by ideologies that serve to maintain hegemonic relationships. He states:

> Critical theory is a theory of history and society driven by a passionate commitment to understand how ideological systems and societal structures hinder and impede the fullest development of humankind's collective potential to be self-reflective and self-determining historical actors. (p. 14)

A second assumption of critical theory can be drawn from this notion of pain and the impediments to full development, which is that a more just, fair and equitable order is desirable and achievable. Critical theorists realize this through relentless questioning of the taken for granted assumptions of the systems and structures that shape our reality. A third assumption is that this process of critique occurs in the spaces where people congregate, which is the public sphere, and that these places need to be revitalized:

> The public sphere is the ground of the sociological imagination, the social basis of what Habermas calls the interest in emancipation, a safeguard against the rationalization of discourse and interaction. Accordingly, Mills and Habermas take the revitalization of the public sphere as the sine qua non of the effort to approximate the ideals of reason, freedom and

> democracy in contemporary society.
> (Hearn, 1985, p.165)

A fourth assumption is that democratic participation is an important part of being a contributing member of society. Such participation allows for individuals acting collectively to have some power and control over the direction and structures of society. Hearn (1985) states that John Dewey and the progressive educators influenced critical theorists such as Habermas in this assumption. As people become involved in participatory democracy, they become aware of their abilities, as well as their limits, to effect social change. A fifth assumption is that the development of the individual is vital in and of itself as well as in revitalizing the public sphere. This provides critical theory with its humanistic connection (Hearn, 1985).

Statement of Position

This research attempts to bring together a number of strands that represent my interests, questions and philosophies. My primary interest is that of adult education outside of the mainstream. This includes the learning processes in grassroots or community-based contexts where people are able to come to an understanding of who they are within their world. Upon first entering the academic world I was inspired by the philosophies of

Lindeman and Freire, who were concerned with adult education as social change, and the collective or social learning that occurs within that context. Lindeman (1926) in particular was concerned with democracy and citizenship and the contribution that individuals, through education, can make to the improvement of society for all. I am concerned about the lack of emphasis that is placed on this particular area within the field and am disenchanted by the increasing trend toward professionalization within adult education as this means a continued movement away from the community towards meeting economic needs. I am, however, inspired by the adult educators that are still working within the margins of the field. These people include the critical, critical feminist and postmodern or poststructural feminist adult educators. They are concerned about the relationship between the individual and society, the potential for change, and the processes of emancipatory education, rather than on training the individual to fit into existing systems. I do not believe that adult education can be secluded from the changing nature of the world and placed in a box that is designated for economic needs only. Learning occurs everywhere and should not be merely instrumentalized for the purposes of one or two systems. These trends are destructive to both humans and nature. What role can adult education play in understanding more about our social world? How do people come together in these changing times to improve their world? Having been raised in a family that was very involved in community organizations and issues, one which was sustained on a cooperative philosophy, it disturbs me when I see these basic tenets of respect for fellow humans being cast aside in favour of a dehumanizing ethos. Thus, I join other adult educators who are trying to understand more about social learning processes.

I have provided an overview of my interests in pursuing social learning, but I also come to this project with particular philosophical orientations. First I consider myself a critical feminist adult educator. My base is in Habermas, and the socialist feminist critiques of his critical theory, but I have also recently been engaging with the feminist postmodern and feminist postructuralist writings. Beyond that I claim some allegiance to the humanistic perspective, as well as the progressive adult educators. This background provides me with a particular way of understanding the problem of the marginalization of critical forms of adult education, and although I attempt to bracket these perspectives, they remain part of me as I carry out the case study.

Statement of Significance

The significance of this thesis to the field of adult education is as discussed above: it provides research in the area of social learning, which is rapidly being pushed to the sidelines of the field. Understanding more about alternative sites for adult education is necessary in the total scheme of how education affects both the individual and society. It provides a more comprehensive picture of what is occurring than simply a focus on those sites that are formal, institutionalized and accredited. If adult education has any hope of playing a role in counteracting those forces that infringe upon the private, public and intimate sphere, in providing opportunities for the development of democratic capacities, then it is necessary for adult educators to have an understanding of democratic theory. They need to understand the current discourse on democracy in order to understand the implications for critical adult education. This type of research also helps to ensure that graduate students will come in contact with alternative philosophies, and thus be inspired to pursue research that moves away from the mainstream. The more the body of knowledge increases within alternative adult education, the harder it will be to ignore it within programs that educate adult educators. As well, this type of research will add to the body of sociological literature which is underrepresented in the field. Finally, this research may shed some light on new ways of carrying out democratic educative processes that could be useful within many other educational contexts.

Thesis Organization

This thesis provides a theoretical overview of the relationship between critical adult education and social theory, as well as an empirical study that examines the social learning processes within a women's collective. Chapter one has outlined the basis of the problem of the marginalization of a critical form of adult education. Given the nature of the issue and its extension beyond adult education into social theory, chapter two provides both a literature review of relevant adult education theorists, as well as an understanding of the origin of the problem. These origins take us to Habermas's notion of the dualistic split between system and lifeworld, as well as his theory of communicative rationality, both of which will be outlined. Habermas also provides the basis for an understanding of civil society, which will be further developed by Cohen and Arato (1992). They also develop a theory of social movements in conjunction with their understanding of civil society. Each will be briefly described.

Chapter three is concerned with the research methodology, and provides an extensive overview of the research site and situation. Chapter four contains the first section of the findings and describes and discusses the theme of Learning and Action. Traditionally, the findings from the data are presented separately from theory. However, because the three types of interests or learning (instrumental, practical and emancipatory) that Habermas outlines in Knowledge and Human Interests (1971) provide such an appropriate heuristic for illustrating the intricacies of the process of social learning, theory will be mixed with data in this chapter. This chapter also discusses the factors, such as leadership and pressure from external organizations, that influence the degree to which learning and action can occur.

Chapter five is based on the second theme that emerged, that of Support and Identity within Collectivity. Although theory and data presentation are combined in chapter four, this chapter separates the two more clearly. The first section provides the specific findings on collective identity and on support within the collective, and is followed by a discussion on the theoretical understanding of these two factors. Exclusion and power are issues that surface from this discussion and are addressed in this section.

Chapter six is the final chapter and discusses some of the contradictions that arise in the research. One of the issues that emerges is that of the notion of citizenship for women, particularly those on social assistance. Analyses from both a socialist feminist framework, and a postmodern feminist perspective will be provided in scratching the surface of this concern, and it is suggested as area for further study. This chapter also contains sections on the significance of the thesis, the implications of the research, as well as the conclusion.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This sociologically oriented project draws upon a variety of literature in attempting to come to an understanding of the research question. First is that of the adult education literature that relates to the problem of the marginalization of critical forms of adult education, social learning and the development of democratic capacities. Because the research question is predicated upon the critical social theory of Habermas, the second section of this literature review will briefly outline his theories of the dualistic split between system and lifeworld, and of communicative rationality. Feminist critiques of Habermas's theory reveal inconsistencies or contradictions. Fraser's (1989) gendered re-read of Habermas is particularly instructive and her critique will be briefly discussed. The final section outlines the theory of civil society and of social movements provided by Cohen and Arato (1992). This theory provides a definition of civil society as well as an understanding of a collective means of the defense of this sphere. Essentially this chapter builds the necessary foundation and makes the appropriate connections between within critical adult education and the concept of civil society.

Adult Education Literature

Critical adult educators have been vocal about the direction that the emphasis within adult education is taking. The focus appears to be on the individual learner and away from collective learning processes, and there is great emphasis on prescriptive programming, which effectively closes the spaces for collective self-determination of educational needs and programs. The theorists concerned with these trends include Briton and Plumb (1993), and Plumb (1994), who as critical adult educators attempt to demonstrate the threats that postmodernity will pose to those working in an emancipatory practice. Plumb's (1994) extensive analysis, in particular, provides adult educators with an understanding of postmodernism, and he demonstrates, focusing on three fundamental areas, how the cultural terrain (civil society), upon which adult education is based, continues to be intruded upon. In doing so he draws upon Habermas's notion of the "colonization of the lifeworld" and takes it beyond modernity to show the implications in a postmodern world.

One of the ideas that emerges from Plumb's dismal scenario is that the spaces for public debate and the development of democratic capacities, essential elements within a critical theory of adult education, will be substantially diminished if not entirely eliminated through the commodification of the cultural sphere. Rather than spending the time to identify collective problems and attempt to solve them as citizens, we will be occupied, as consumers, with the pursuit of the postmodern pleasure principle (Briton and Plumb, 1993). Fragmentation, a characteristic of postmodernism, also prevents us from joining together to deal with our problems. Instead, each individual is able to pick and choose elements of various theories that suit her situation individually She has no reason to seek collective answers that have application beyond the individual or specific situation. This in effect will close those spaces for democratic participation as individuals concentrate on themselves and not on who they are as a collectivity. The danger here is that there will be no means of defense against the entire intrusion on the lifeworld by the economic and political spheres.

One of the reasons for the marginalization of socially conscious forms of adult education is because they have been undertheorized. In order to develop a theoretical framework for critical adult education, some educators have suggested that the learning processes within alternative organizations and movements be examined and theorized. Finger (1991) and Welton (1993, 1995) look to social movements as appropriate locations for this to occur. Finger (1991) discusses the new social movements, such as the green movement and the various religious and spiritual movements, as possible sites. He believes that these movements, with their focus on individual transformation before collective transformation, provide adult education with the most appropriate means of navigating the concerns that a postmodern world presents. He reaches this conclusion because he does not believe that it is possible to have universal ideals, something that critical theory advocates. Instead, he believes that if these movements are able to achieve their goals in a postmodern world, then they could provide a template for adult education's understanding of a socially conscious form of education.

Welton (1993) also sees social movements as learning sites, but is critical of Finger's (1991) focus on individual transformation before collective transformation. He believes that the movements that Finger (1991) indentifies do in fact have universal ideals. He draws upon Capra and Spretnak (1984) who state that all new social movements have four basic principles. They include ecology, social responsiblity, grassroots democracy and nonviolence. Welton outlines how these principles address the intrusions upon civil society by the economic and political systems, and believes that critical adult educators can learn a great deal from examining the learning processes in movements that advocate such principles. Although Welton emphasizes social movements as appropriate sites for developing a theoretical framework for critical adult education, he also states that other spaces within civil society, such as familial life and associational life, also need to be examined for their potential in developing a critical learning theory (Welton, 1995).

Hart (1992, 1995) looks at what familial life means within civil society. She draws upon Habermas's notion of the dualistic split between system and lifeworld and explores the relationship between the family and work and the role that education can play. She decries the present public/private split that devalues the work of women within the family and recommends an alternative form of education that brings the work of both inside and outside the home into a more holistic framework. This would alleviate the oppression and division within the present framework.

Welton (1995) also examines the dualistic split between the lifeworld and system. Given the crisis that the andragogical model of adult education is experiencing in contemporary times, he recommends that it be replaced by a social learning paradigm and believes that Habermas's version of social theory provides the framework from which to proceed:

> It will be my argument that Habermas's sociological theory (his dualistic model of the system and lifeworld) and theory of rationalization (his view of the historical unfolding of learning potential of modernity) provide us with the necessary boundary frame and constituent conceptual elements for the study of social learning processes. (Welton, 1995, p. 134)

Welton explicates Habermas's theory in developing the social learning paradigm, and states that adult education must play a role in preventing the colonization of the lifeworld from occurring as these intrusions close the very space upon which a critical form of adult education is fostered and developed. The institutions within civil society are key here as they provide the basis from which we construct our knowledge of ourselves and our world. In this sense they shape our culture, our personalities and our social relations. Welton (1995) proposes six assumptions about institutions within his social learning approach. The first delineates the institutions of civil society from the systems:

> Institutions are the indispensable source from which our character and identity is formed and reformed, and one can differentiate institutions within the lifeworld: (i) institutions of socialization (family, schools); (ii) social integration (groups, collectives, associations); (iii) cultural reproduction (religion, art, science) from those within the domain of the system (the state and economy).
> (Welton, 1995, p. 134)

The second assumption suggests that all institutions are formative and either promote learning or constrain it. Third, those institutions that constrain learning are essentially miseducative and cannot be considered democratic learning communities. This is a function of the structural dynamics at play rather than the fault of the individuals affected by this institution. The fourth assumption discusses the distortion of communication by power relations and interests within a democratic community. Here Welton suggests that Habermas's discourse ethics within his ideal speech situation provides the normative basis for emancipatory education.

The fifth assumption about the social learning approach to institutions provides for the developmentalist perspective of the liberal-humanistic tradition to be maintained along with the critical. Welton (1995) states that "One of the central challenges for the social learning paradigm is to distinguish those conditions that facilitate developmental and emancipatory learning (allow us to become more knowledgable and competent actors within differentiated domains), and those that do not (Forester, 1989)" (p. 135). Finally, the roles of worker, consumer, client and citizen, which Habermas outlines in his dualistic split between system and lifeworld, are important in understanding how they both propel and constrain individuals and collectives within modernity.

Welton does us great service in developing the notion of the learning capacity and potential of institutions for a social learning paradigm. He extends this idea as he begins to engage with Cohen and Arato's (1992) theory of civil society. He discusses the role that critical adult educators must play in the defense of civil society:

> Societies are not undifferentiated wholes, and no educational practice ever transforms society! But if we understand that the **fundamental** task of critical adult educators is to **preserve** the communicative infrastructure

> of the lifeworld and **extend** communicative action into state or economic institutions, then we are able to speak in determinate and realistic ways about the enlightenment and empowerment of persons who occupy different roles with different potential for collective self-determination through communicative action.
> (Welton, 1995, p. 48)

Kastner (1994) also engages Cohen and Arato's theory of civil society in attempting to illuminate how adult education is connected to social movements. She suggests that because adult educators work within the cultural realm, as cultural workers, they must have a thorough comprehension of what the issues and opportunities are within contemporary times:

> Reflection on the issues of other social movements surfaces additional examples of the stakes. If we understand the stakes in this way, as a struggle over identity and who controls its formation, as a contestation over culture, we can begin to see how adult educators, as workers in the cultural sphere, are implicated in, and not immune to social movements' critiques of society.
> (Kastner, 1994, p. 245)

Kastner believes that the marginalization of critical forms of adult education will cause those within social movements to view all adult education as institutionalized and serving the economic and political systems. Adult education then becomes an area of critique by social movements. It is necessary for critical adult educators to speak up and align themselves with social movements in understanding the potential of learning processes in social change, or be prepared to contest the space within the cultural terrain for this "educative turf":

> I propose that the theory-of-civil-society approach in fact does contain a response to the question of Adult Education's role in social movement education. This possibility lies in the theory's emphasis on civil society and culture as a target of social movement action for change. From this perspective, our own uncertainty (and in fact social movements'ambivalence) about our role lies **precisely in the proposition that it is education**, as part of civil society, part ofculture, **that is at stake**. We as adult educators are in contested terrain.
> (Kastner, 1994, p. 247)

Kastner's warning about the necessity for critical adult education to develop a theoretical base is even more serious than the other critical adult educators. In her scenario, critical adult education must not only become more relevant inside the field of adult education, but outside of it as well.

Critical Social Theory Literature

All these critical adult educators illustrate the relationships between adult education, and civil society. It is necessary to provide a clearer understanding of the theoretical underpinnings of this relationship and ultimately of this thesis. As the critical adult educators discussed above, and Cohen and Arator, in their understanding of civil society, base their ideas on Habermas, the following section will provide an overview of the relevant areas within his extensive writings. As Fraser (1989) points out, the importance of Habermas for critical intellectuals is undeniable:

> Habermas's social theory is the most ambitious recent attempt to do for the capitalist societies of the late

> twentieth century what Marx' Capital tried to do for those of the late nineteenth. It aims to identify the structural dynamics, the crisis tendencies, and the forms of conflict characteristic of these societies. Moreover, the theory is elaborated with the "practical intent" of promoting emancipatory social tranformation. It seeks to clarify the situation and prospects of social movements whose practice might contribute to such transformation. Thus, critical intellectuals with ties to social movements have no choice to engage it.
> (Fraser, 1989, p. 7)

Two areas of Habermas's writings will be discussed in this section. First is his understanding of civil society, which is presupposed in his conception of the dualistic split between lifeworld and system. This includes his delineation of public and private within the lifeworld. Second is his theory of communicative action, which provides the basis for an understanding of learning within his theory which many adult education theorists are recognizing as valuable in relating social theory to the field.

In The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere, Habermas (1962), outlined his theory of civil society and what he termed its "rise, contradictory institutionalization, and subsequent decline" (Cohen and Arato, 1992, p. 211). Although civil society was to be a sphere where the ideals of modernity (justice, freedom and equality) could be realized, it became subordinated to the economic and political spheres and lost its original focus. In order to delineate this process, Habermas developed his theory of the dualistic split between system and lifeworld.

Essentially within this theory the lifeworld encompasses culture, personality and society. Civil society is part of this broad definition, and in Habermas's analysis concerns the institutions within the lifeworld. Systems refers to the economy and state/political spheres. Habermas refers to the constant intrusion by these spheres into the lifeworld as a process of "colonization." In this notion of the "colonization of the lifeworld," the political and economic forces are viewed as imperialist entities that claim portions of the civil society as their own. This does not occur by force, but is done through the media of money and power. To illustrate the problem, Habermas splits the lifeworld into a private sphere and a public sphere:

> ...in the present context the public and private spheres are seen not as mediations but as spheres within the lifeworld with which economy and state can have input-output relations structured exclusively in terms of interchanges of money and power, which also structure state-economy relations.
> (Cohen and Arato, 1992, p. 430).

Habermas then identifies two roles in each of these spheres that exemplify the intrusions by the systems. In the private sphere of the lifeworld they include worker and consumer, in the public sphere they include citizen and client. The lifeworld is the realm of symbolic reproduction, where, through dialogue, we determine our understanding of who we are and how we relate to the world and one another. The intrusions by the systems creates a situation where the economic and political world take over this function:

> The functional ties of money and power become noticable only to the degree that elements of a private way of life and a cultural-political form of life get split off from the symbolic structures of the lifeworld through the monetary redefinition of goals, relations and services, life-spaces and life-times, and through the bureaucratization of decision, duties and rights, responsibilities and dependencies.
> (Habermas, 1987, p. 322, as quoted in Welton, 1995, p. 143)

The economy defines the roles of worker and consumer, and to some extent citizen, and the political system defines citizen and client. As these roles are no longer determined through dialogical means, and simply accepted, there is no means of critique. Habermas believed that the re-introduction of critique was the key in overcoming the colonization of the lifeworld.

Habermas's theory of communicative rationality was developed around the ideas of critique and discourse. He felt that a return to critique would allow for a return to the ideals of justice, freedom and equality. Habermas placed the theory of communicative rationality within an emancipatory theory of learning about the interests that we need in order to function within the world. These interests include the instrumental, the practical and the emancipatory. The first of these refers to the development of skills that are necessary to function within the physical world, such as learning to work a computer, or learning to drive a car. Practical skills refers to communication and what we need to know in order to live with others. The third type of interest is emancipatory, and this is critique of the assumptions that we make in the other two areas of interests. This involves the reflection and dialogue, referred to above, on the assumptions that we take for granted in knowing our world. Essentially Habermas, in keeping with the linguistic turn in philosophical thought, identified language as a key component in this whole process, both in terms of coming to an understanding of how one is oppressed, and also in generating the new individual and collective visions for overcoming this oppression:

> It is only in the creation of a public realm of discourse, open to all, in which citizens come together to pursue their common rather than private interests, getting to grips with the issues created by the destruction of meaning, that the reconstructed life-world can be studied and critically evaluated in a way which frees citizens from its reifying power.
> (Young, 1989, p. 30).

Habermas believed that the family was the original site of critical discourse. It was a space where the subjective or private, was translated into the intersubjective, or public realm. He felt that it could serve as a model of critical discourse that could occur in other institutions within the lifeworld:

> Moreover, the family, although incapable of eliminating the constraints of the economic world or even of freeing itself from its own patriarchal heritage, nevertheless defends the intimate subjective experience and intersubjective ties of its members, qua human beings,

> in the face of external powers. Equally important, it is the living source of experiences of passionate self-examination and rational searching for mutual understanding that are capable of finding other forms of institutionalization than the family itself.
> (Cohen and Arato, 1992, p. 214).

In critiquing the ways in which the world is constructed and its oppressive characteristics, Habermas designed the ideal speech situation which would facilitate this discourse:

> (i) that what we are saying or hearing is intelligible, i.e. is coded according to the usual rules, etc.;
> (ii) that what we are saying and hearing is true in so far as it implies the existence of states of affairs, etc.;
> (iii) that the persons speaking are being truthful or sincere;
> (iv) and that the things said are normatively appropriate considering the relationships among people and between them and the situation they are in.
> (Young, 1989, pp. 75-76)

He believed that these assumptions were universal and would hold for communication across cultures and histories. They provided the impetus for communicative critique and the creation of new collective means of overcoming the oppression within the social structures. The return to the public sphere and of the citizen would put modernity back on track such that its ideals could be completed.

This educational process had great potential, and it was in the location of agents to facilitate it that Habermas was able to overcome one of the stumbling blocks of the Frankfurt School. These earlier theorists had become disillusioned with Marx's idea of the proletariat as the location of change, but were unable to identify an alternative. In contrast, Habermas appealed to the tranformative agents within the various social movements. He saw that it could not be one particular group, but needed to be a plurality of alternative organizations that would serve as the base for transformation.

One particular social movement that has taken up the cause is feminism. Although able to pick up on the critical nature of Habermas's theory, feminists were not willing to simply accept some of the presuppositions of it. First and foremost, they provided a gendered reading of his works to discover the masculine subtext implicit in the theories. One of the most prominent critiques is by Fraser (1989) who explicates the gender subtext within Habermas's dualistic theory of system and lifeworld. She develops six theses that demonstrate this but her critical points are:

> First, Habermas's account fails to theorize the patriarchal, norm-mediated character of late capitalist official economic and administrative systems. Likewise, it fails to theorize the systemic, money- and power-mediated character of male dominance in the domestic sphere of the late capitalist lifeworld. Consequently, his colonization thesis fails to grasp that the channels of influence between system and lifeworld institutions are multi-directional. And it tends to replicate rather than problematize, a major institutional support of women's subordination in late capitalism, namely, the gender-based separation of both the masculine public sphere and the state-regulated economy of sex-segmented paid work and social welfare from privatized female childrearing.
>
> (Fraser, 1989, p. 137).

Specifically, Fraser (1989) examines Habermas's delineation of the roles of worker, consumer, citizen and client. She illustrates how patriarchy structures each of these roles and how women are affected by this structure. In terms of worker, she investigates how Habermas's separates the household from the economy, and how this division serves to ignore the work that women do in childrearing. It "directs attention away from the fact that the household, like the paid workplace, is a site of labor, albeit of unremunerated and often unrecognized labor (Fraser, 1989, p. 119). This division assumes that productive work is done in the paid workplace only. Fraser (1989) also examines those women who are in the paid workforce and states that their experiences are different from men's. Whereas the role of worker for men is that of provider, women in the workforce are simply supplementing the family income. Their primary roles are still as mothers and wives, as dependents within the household. Fraser (1989) concludes that the role of the worker, which is the link between the economy and the family is a masculine role.

The other role that links the economy and the family is that of consumer. Fraser (1989) thinks that this role is created as a feminine one because it is treated as the companion role to the male worker. The consumer is responsible for the purchase and preparation of goods and services in maintaining the household. It is, like the role of childrearing, unpaid and unrecognized. The role of consumer is assigned to women by a masculinist sexual division of labor.

Fraser (1989), in examining the public sphere, believes that the role of citizen is masculine. She focuses on Habermas's idea that dialogue is the distinguishing characteristic of citizenship. Habermas posits that citizens are able to take part in public affairs because of their abilities to engage in rational dialogue. Fraser (1989) states that women are prevented from being citizens because of the ways in which men exclude them from discourse. She cites studies on male dominance and female subordination on the dynamics of dialogue. She also discusses the way in which women's words are reinterpreted by men. Women are not considered rational; therefore, they are unable to engage in rational dialogue and to participate as citizens.

The role of client, like that of consumer, is created primarily as a feminine role by a patriarchal system. Fraser (1989) contends that Habermas ignores the fact the those who are considered clients of the welfare state are overwhelmingly women, particularly those who are poor, elderly or are single mothers. She discusses the fact that there are two sides to the welfare state's services to clients. On one side there are "masculine" services and programs that are specifically designed for the male breadwinner. These include unemployment insurance programs. On the other side, are the "feminine" services that are designed for the "failures," or those women without a male-headed household. An example of these programs is welfare. The masculine programs allow for choice in the way in which the funds that one receives in assistance are utilized. This allows the recipient to be independent. The funds in the feminine programs are more strictly controlled, and essentially reinforce the dependency status of those requiring assistance. Fraser (1989) suggests that the character of male dominance in the role of client shifts from private to public patriarchy.

Through her analysis of the roles of worker, consumer, citizen and client, Fraser (1989) illustrates how Habermas fails to identify the gender subtext within his work. She expands upon this and states that a gendered re-read of Habermas serves to confirm the patriarchy that is inherent within a capitalist system:

> Moreover, a gender-sensitive reading of these connections discloses some important theoretical and conceptual implications. It reveals that male dominance is intrinsic rather than accidental to classical capitalism, for the institutional structure of this social formation is actualized by means of gendered roles.
> (Fraser, 1989, p. 128)

Fraser (1989) concludes that a more appropriate analysis would be one not between system and lifeworld, but of the masculine subtext within this split and the oppression that women face because of it. She also recommends that critical theories incorporate gender-specific categories. Despite her analysis and the allegations that emerge from her work, she believes that Habermas provides the needed groundwork for critical theorists working towards social change.

Civil Society Literature

Given Habermas's theories and Fraser's critique, Cohen and Arato (1992) set out to construct a theory of civil society which included a theory of social movements. In this monumental task, they draw upon a wealth of resources to overcome the theoretical problems that they perceive in any one theory. Although not entirely enthralled with Habermas, they see his theories as providing the most appropriate critical base for their own thoughts. They review the critiques of civil society by Arendt, Habermas, Schmitt, Foucault, and Luhmann, addressing problems in each as they uproot stones for their own foundation. Despite the definitions that each of these theorists provides for a civil society, Cohen and Arato (1992) see it as part of the lifeworld that Habermas outlines:

> We understand "civil society" as a sphere of social interaction between economy and state, composed above all of the intimate sphere (especially the family), the sphere of associations (especially voluntary associations), social movements, and forms of public communication. Modern civil society is created through forms of self-constitution and self-mobilization. It is institutionalized and generalized through laws, and especially subjective rights, that stabilize social differentiation. While the self-creative and

> institutionalized dimensions can exist separately, in the long term both independent action and institutionalization are necessary for the reproduction of civil society.
>
> (Cohen and Arato, 1992, p. ix).

They focus on associational life, rather than on the broad focus of culture, society and personality that Habermas includes. They place their emphasis on only those aspects of associational life, within these three categories, that are either institutionalized or in the process of becoming institutionalized. It is the action against reification of institutions, and the subsequent institutionalization of these action-oriented associations that lead them to a theory of social movements. Here they evaluate the state of the art in social movement theory in North America, as well as the European model. In the former, resource-mobilization theory is predominant. This theory focuses on "such 'objective' variables as organization, interests, resources, opportunities, and strategies to account for large-scale mobilizations" (Cohen and Arato, p. 497). There are a number of different versions but they all approach collective behavior in terms of a cost-benefit analysis and rational strategies. The Europeans, in contrast, have developed a new social movements paradigm that addresses the issues of culture and identity in the formation of solidarity:

> Yet, one might argue, the salient feature of the new social movements is not that they engage in expressive action or assert their identities but that they involve actors who have become aware of their capacity to create

> identities and of the power relations involved in the social construction of those identities. Contemporary actors are concerned not only with affirming the content of a specific identity but also with the formal elements involved in identity formation. They have articulated the formal principle of an equal chance for all to participate in group processes through which identities are formed, and they have become self-reflective regarding the social purposes of identity formation. This increased self-reflection is also applied to existing societal norms and to the structures of domination involved in their maintenance.
> (Cohen and Arato, 1992, p. 511).

For both these models, the contested terrain is neither the economic or political sphere, but the cultural, or civil society. The attacks are on the institutions that exist within civil society, and in theorizing how this is accomplished, Cohen and Arato suggest that neither the resource-mobilization theory or the new social movements paradigm is adequate to explain this undertaking. Instead they suggest a comprehensive theory of social movements that takes into account both of these ideas. They draw upon Tilley's (1978) political process version of resource-mobilization theory that suggests that civil society is the terrain of social movements and collective action, rather than the former conception of action as occurring within the economic or political terrains. Strategies are employed by social movements that initiate the attack from civil society by means of contact points with the other spheres. From the new social movements paradigm, Touraine (1981) provides the framework for Cohen and Arato with his analysis of the "structural and cultural dimensions of contemporary society, and an action-theoretic analysis of the conflict-laden processes of identity construction and the formation of political projects by collective actors." (Cohen and Arato, 1992, p. 513). In combining these two theories, the authors are able to propose a theory of civil society that incorporates the identity/cultural aspect of associational life that is important in contesting the existing institutions within civil society, and the rational strategic aspects that are able to find intersection points with the economic and political systems. Without the combination of the two theories, the theory would not be able to promote a greater democratization within civil society (a defensive characteristic of contemporary movements) as well as within the other two spheres (an offensive characteristic). Cohen and Arato reconstruct Habermas's dualistic theory of system/lifeworld to provide the initial framework for this to happen:

> Our reconstruction of the system/lifeworld distinction along the lines of a theory of civil society corrects these two blind spots. On the one hand, we translate the concept of the lifeworld into the institutional articulation of a civil society secured by rights. On the other hand, we argue that there are receptors for the influence of civil society within political (and economic) society and that these can, within limits, be added to and democratized. Consequently, on our version of the dualistic conception of society, the dual logic of all the new movements can come into view. Our appoach enables us to see that movements operate on both sides of the system/lifeworld divide, and we are thus able to accommodate the contributions of both paradigms of collective action. (Cohen and Arato, 1992, p. 531).

Ultimately, Cohen and Arato, in developing their theory of civil society draw upon and revise Habermas's theory of communicative rationality as well as his dualistic theory of system and lifeworld. They expand upon Habermas's understanding of rights and the roles of the private and public spheres. They accept and revise the notions of critical reflection, discourse ethics and social learning processes, which link critical adult education to Cohen and Arato's conception of civil society.

This literature review is certainly not exhaustive, but simply provides an initial point of departure for developing some understanding of the interrelationships between adult education, social movements, civil society, and critical theory. It demonstrates the problem of the colonization of the lifeworld, and suggests critical adult education's role in the defense of civil society. It also provides the framework upon which the research question is predicated.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The methodology used in this research project is a case study qualitative approach. It seems to be the most relevant in that it provides the framework which is appropriate for a question that explores the nature of and the processes within an organization. It allows for the "what is happening here?" question through which both description and interpretation can occur. The methods in the research project were participant observation of the research group, indepth interviewing, document analysis, as well as my own journaling. The case study method is conducive to this multi-method approach in that it provides the opportunity for the triangulation of data from the various sources in order to fully understand how social learning processes within the organization occur.

Methodological Literature Review

The case study is one of the most familiar methods of qualitative inquiry and has its roots in the areas of psychology, sociology, political science, economics and business management. As educators strive to understand complex phenomena within a particular setting, they often look to the case study as their method (Borg, Gall, and

Gall, 1993). Merriam (1988) suggests that there are a number of distinguishing characteristics of qualitative research that are most appropriate for case studies. First, researchers employing this methodology are generally more concerned with the process than with the product or outcome. Second, how people make meaning of their world, their social relations and their experiences is what case studies within the qualitative paradigm attempt to explicate. "It is assumed that meaning is embedded in people's experiences and mediated through the investigator's own perceptions. A researcher cannot get 'outside' the phenomenom" (Merriam, 1988, p. 19). Third, the researcher is the primary instrument for collecting data and for analysis and interpretation. Fourth, case studies involve fieldwork, where the researcher must go into the field to observe behavior in its natural setting. Fifth, the data that is collected for the case study is largely descriptive, and sixth, the process of analysis that is used is inductive. Ultimately these characteristics of the case study suggest that it is "particularistic, descriptive, holistic, and inductive" (Merriam, 1988, p. 31). Merriam quotes Foreman (1948) in making her case for the usefulness of case studies:

> Case study, Foreman says, is particularly useful when the problem involves devloping a new line of inquiry, needs further conceptualization of factors or functions, "demands enphasis on the **pattern** of interpretation given by subjects," and involves determining "the particular **pattern** of factors significant in a given case.

(Merriam, 1988, p. 31)

Essentially, the case study is descriptive and interpretive and attempts to build theory rather than test it. However, there are circumstances within the realities of the research situation that make it difficult to fit the research process into this neat package. For instance, there may be cases, such as this research project, where a theoretical framework is required in order to develop the research question. In these cases, inductive analysis is not completely possible and the researcher must be constantly aware of the potential for the theoretical framework to influence the findings. Regardless of how strict one is in adhering to the ideals of the case study, this method allows the researcher to paint a picture of the particular situation, and then to interpret the processes that occur within it in order to provide some sort of an understanding of what is occurring.

The case study method is used for intensive examination of one or two instances or examples of a particular phenomenon. It typically employs participant observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis in constructing an understanding of the situation under study. This allows for the triangulation of data during the analysis phase, to enhance the credibility of the research project. Merrian (1988) refers to the case study as carrying the theoretical orientation from which it is derived. For instance she suggests that there are ethnographic, psychological and sociological case studies. Goetz amd LeCompte (1984) would disagree with her analysis, particularly in regards to an ethnographic case study, as they regard an ethnography as separate from a case study. The main point that they make is that an ethnography requires a great deal of time in the field, preferably a year, whereas, there does not seem to be any particular time line associated with case studies. It appears to be more common, and acceptable, to spend a smaller amount of time in the field with a case study than with an ethnography. Goetz and LeCompte (1984) would suggest that "studies using tightly structured and limited schedules for observation..." (p. 18) are not full scale ethnographies but rather "quasi-ethnographies" (p. 18). Studies with limited time schedules, descriptive rather than interpretive studies, ethnographic-type studies that are used to provide an understanding of the context for quantitative research, or studies that utilize ethnographic techniques but do not adopt anthropological theoretical frameworks or constructs fall into this category of quasi-ethnography. It appears that although there is disagreement on the type of terms that are used within qualitative research, there is a great deal of overlap between methodologies. There is not a great deal of consistency in the application of the terms. Given the controversy over time limitations discussed above,it appears that with a limited fieldwork period and a focus on only particular elements within the organization, the case study is the most appropriate methodology for this project.

The sociological nature of the theoretical framework of this research project suggests that it can be considered a sociological case study:

> Rather than focusing on an individual as in a psychological orientation, or on culture as in an anthropological study, **sociological case studies** attend to the constructs of society and socialization in studying educational phenomena.
>
> (Merriam, 1988, p. 26)

Feminist sociologists have found the case study method especially appropriate for building information on how these constructs and socialization have and continue to affect women.

One of the main concerns is that the image of the world is incomplete because women's experience has been omitted by sociologists in the past. Those groups that are working outside of the mainstream must be taken into account in providing a full picture and understanding of the society. Reinharz (1992) suggests that:

> To take another example, if sociologists document only mainstream organizations (e.g. medical schools), rather than the organizations of those who are attempting to change society (e.g. members of a feminist illegal abortion collective), then we have a skewed image of medical services.
>
> (Reinharz, 1992, p. 167).

As literature outside of the mainstream accumulates, there is a greater chance that the findings of this research will be taken into account, or could provide the new theoretical constructs for understanding society. This is particularly relevant for critical adult educators, who are being pushed further to the margins of the field. The knowledge that can be gained from these areas serves to prevent the field from having a one-dimensional focus. These studies are needed to complete the picture and provide added dimensions.

Description of Research Site

The organization that I worked with in this research project is a women's collective in northeast Edmonton called Candora. It is a group of low income women who come together to discuss and overcome issues relevant to them such as poverty, unemployment, parenting and childcare, settlement and language concerns and family violence. It is an organization which provides educational programs that are determined by the women to assist them with these issues. The intent is to build independence through interdependence, and to replace loneliness, frustration and isolation with collectivity and community-building. They do receive funding from government sources, but resist the notion of prescriptive programming with strings attached as much as they can, sometimes to the organization's peril. Staff and participants in the collective are involved in the consensual running of the collective. The following section provides a detailed overview of Candora including its history, structure, programs, people and principles.

History

Candora is a non-profit organization that provides space for social learning. It can be considered part of associational life within Cohen and Arato's (1992) definition of civil society. The organization was established in 1989 as a community development/education initiative by the City of Edmonton Department of Social Services, and by the Consumer Education Project of Grant MacEwan Community College. Candora's origins lie in the Abbottsfield Women's Project, which was started by the Consumer Education Project. The project worker in the Consumer Education Project was instrumental in establishing the Abbottsfield group as a participatory community development initiative. Traditionally the Consumer Education Project had identified the needs within the community and then provided programs to meet them. The project worker wanted to change this approach, and to work in a more participatory way. Rather than have the experts or professionals identify needs, she believed that it would be more beneficial for the people in the community to name their own issues, and then to take action on them. The project worker found that a participatory approach was much more difficult than a traditional one. In fact, the new way of working began to challenge her middle class understanding of the world, particularly around the issues of poverty and how the systems were oppressive to the people that she was working with.

The Abbottsfield Women's Project lasted for a year, then, many of the women moved away from the community. The project worker, along with a staff member from the City of Edmonton Social Services Department who was also involved in the community, began to work together to form what was to become Candora. The initial program was called the Community Advocacy Project, and the intent was to have community members work as advocates within their own neighbourhoods. Funding was secured and a core group of women were hired. They included Canadian women and women who had immigrated to Canada from Latin America to escape oppressive political regimes. The women were diverse in their backgrounds and experiences, but all were concerned about the issues of crime, poverty, unemployment, violence and vandalism in their community. Some had experience in community development, and in gathering information about their conditions and asking why things were as they were. They brought these skills of questioning and critique to Candora.

The core group of women met twice a week and slowly began to determine the nature and direction of the organization. One woman describes the process:

> We met Tuesdays and Thursdays. We did a community walkabout. A format started to take shape: Look at our community, look at ourselves, look at action - what did we want to do?
>
> (We Are Candora, 1994, p. 11)

There was no prescribed format to follow, but the women, through dialogue, identified who they were, what their issues were and how they could take action to solve their concerns. Over the first year, many of the core group left Candora as they moved away, went back to school or found work. There were still a few members left, who were involved in the early stages of Candora, and they served as leaders for the organization for the first five or six years.

Candora means "Can Do in Rundle and Abbottsfield" which refers to the ability of the people, specifically women, in these two neighbourhoods to overcome their personal and community difficulties. It also means openness and honesty in Spanish, which is significant for members of the Spanish speaking community. The organization is located in a lower income area within the City of Edmonton. This area was built in the 1970s during the boom years in Alberta, and was intended to provide low income housing for the City. Although the City originally provided funding for the housing complexes, this eventually ceased with dwindling municipal budgets. The developers who had entered this joint venture with the municipality were not willing to put the additional funds into maintaining the complexes, and they fell into disrepair. Their decreased value makes them affordable to those on social assistance and the working poor. As these groups have not traditionally given voice to their concerns in any organized manner, conditions continued to decline. This community development project attempts to address some of the concerns that come with lack of attention such as substandard housing, increased crime rates, vandalism, and a high transiency rate. The area became one in which people were not willing to stay for long, but use it as a stepping stone to somewhere else.

Single parent families on social assistance, primarily headed by women, make up a large portion of the population of these neighbourhoods. It is a multicultural community with a large aboriginal population as well as a diverse group of immigrants, many of whom come from Latin America. Many of the women in the community are isolated due to issues of poverty, unemployment, lack of child care, domestic abuse, settlement and language barriers. Without family or friends nearby, and facing some of the community problems, these women have a low commitment to the community. Candora provides a space for them to come together, to meet people and, to identify and take action on the issues that they are confronted with.

Structure

Although Candora functions as a collective and is run on a consensual basis, there is a leadership structure. The core of leaders, who were involved from the beginning, hired a Coordinator to facilitate the educational process within Candora, and handle the administrative and financial aspects. The Coordinator, who was actually involved in the group as a participant from early on, worked on a part-time basis, and served in her position for the first six years of the organization's life. Some of the core group of leaders also became part of the leadership structure as outreach workers. The staff complement, at the time of this study, consisted of a Coordinator, a Building A Business Towards Self-employment Program Coordinator, an Administrative/financial Coordinator, a Child Care Worker, three Outreach Workers (one for the aboriginal community, one for the Spanish-speaking community, and one for all others), and women who were employed to work within the organization as hostesses and child care workers as part of the Personal and Community Enrichment Program (PACE). Over the course of the study, the Outreach Worker for the Spanish-speaking community changed and the position was then shared by three women. The existence of a leadership structure makes Candora similar to conventional community education programs. The difference lies in the fact that the staff and the women in the group work to neutralize the hierarchy. It is also different because of its holistic and participatory approach and its stress on collectivity.

The Coordinator plays a key role in the organization, and the philosophy that she brings is important. She must be able to work with the women and the community as well as with the agencies and organizations that provide funding. Candora's participatory way of functioning makes it different from other educational organizations, and places it outside of the mainstream. The Coordinator needs to be someone who is an advocate of participatory education and is able to work in the chaos that this approach demands. Most importantly, she needs to be able to honour the women in the group and be present for their issues, concerns, voices and crises.

Programs

Candora is based in the local Abbottsfield Mall and is open four days per week. The programs and the staff have been funded through Alberta Social Services, Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development, The City of Edmonton Department of Social Services, and various private foundations. The Personal and Community Enrichment Program (PACE) provides most of the base funding for the organization and is designed to give those who have been out of the work force for a long time a preliminary introduction. Participants are involved in a weekly "life choices" session, and also work two and a half hours per week at Candora. This is a year long program, although individuals can leave once they feel that they may be ready for more advanced or traditional pre-employment programs, or they find employment. The "life choices" sessions are open to all women within the community, not just the PACE participants. This is the time for women to bring out their issues and discuss their concerns. There is a large table for people to sit around, although it is frequently too small to accommodate everyone. Regardless of where people sit in the room, they are included in the discussions and activities. Coffee and tea, and frequently snack foods, are available for everyone. The usual weekly format for these sessions is divided into two sections. The first half is for "housekeeping," and the second is for presentations by the women or visitors, planning for up-coming events, workshops, or discussions around group or community issues. A "checking in" component, which is a time for the women to talk about their successes, joys and frustrations, as well as their issues and general state of being, is incorporated as often as possible. The "housekeeping" is essentially an information sharing session and a time to deal with minor decisions within the group, such as who should attend a particular conference or meeting, whether to donate a craft item to a local school doing fundraising, or what hours to run a Christmas gift wrapping booth in the mall. The other half of the sessions are devoted to identifying and discussing issues, or learning new skills and information. There are times when the women are asked to provide their input on certain issues. For instance, Candora was asked to give a presentation at a conference on women in poverty. Each woman in the room was given the opportunity to provide her input. This collective input was then presented at the conference by members of Candora. These types of sessions stimulate discussion on issues and the action that can be taken to alleviate these difficulties.

Another major program within Candora is child care. Participation is a fundamental principle within the organization so the barriers to involvement need to be addressed. Child care is a major issue for many women; thus, a physical space for this purpose was incorporated:

> One of the greatest barriers facing involvement in the community was child care. Many women who otherwise would be very active found it impossible because family responsibilities took precedence. Knowing this, child care was provided from the beginning. This solved many problems and created many problems at the same time. In the beginning there was nothing for the children, toys and games were expensive and hard to get. The child care room was staffed with volunteers some of whom were not interested in stimulating the children. Most were not qualified child care workers. There were language barriers because of the diversity of the people. It was a long search to find a child care worker who would relate to the issues facing this community, who would deal with poverty and language barriers, deal effectively with parents with low self-esteem and help children who never had any previous experience with group play interact.
>
> (We Are Candora, 1994, pp. 31-32)

There have been other programs and initiatives within Candora over the years, each one derived from the issues and interests of the women. One example is a preparation for employment program, which was very similar to the PACE program, but more extensive. Like the PACE program, it focused on the development of individual and group skills, as well as employable skills. The holistic and participatory nature of the preparation for employment program was not valued by the funders, and they withdrew their financial commitment to the program.

Programs such as native crafts, sewing, cooking, and the gardening project, provide women with technical skills, but as one Candora Woman stated: "With their hands busy, their tongues will loosen." She meant that the women, through their involvement and interaction in a program or activity, can begin to talk, and share their experiences with one another. They may develop friendships, build support networks, and overcome their isolation. Building communication and interaction skills are important in the parenting programs that have been run at Candora by the local health unit. Interacting with others and learning about interdependence is part of the collective kitchens that women can participate in. These skills are also important in the parenting and domestic abuse support groups that were part of Candora. The organization is also connected with a food coop or club, a craft coop and an English language program. As women get involved in any of the programs that Candora offers, they learn technical skills, or skills in interacting with others. Through the relationships that they build and their informal discussions, they may discover that others experience similar difficulties. This may lead them to skills in questioning the reasons behind their difficulties, and in taking action. Learning the skills necessary for social action and change does not necessarily occur in most programs or situations, but the potential exists for the development of these skills because of Candora's emphasis on identifying issues and taking action.

People

The people of Candora are women within the community, most of whom are experiencing personal difficulties. Others are those who wish to provide their special knowledge or assistance to fellow community members. As a large proportion of the population is made up of single women with families, any form of community development must address their concerns. The Tuesday morning "life choices" sessions are not only for the PACE participants, but for anyone in the community. The Outreach Workers, one for the aboriginal community, one for the Spanish speaking community, and one for all others within the local area, are active in drawing women into the organization. The women themselves are encouraged to bring their friends, or others whom they might believe to be isolated. Some women are referred by their social workers, and others come on their own. Their needs and desires are diverse and range from attempting to overcome loneliness, to wishing to learn how to use the food that they get at the food bank, to learning English, to escaping difficult relationships for a few hours. There are very few men involved as it is a women's organization. As one women stated:

> I think if there were men involved here they would try and take charge, what they do everywhere else. It wouldn't be fair to the ladies because this is where we come to bare our souls, to talk to each other about our problems. To try and talk to a man about something that he would not understand would be funny. He's got no knowledge of what women go through.

The men who visit Candora at times are husbands, partners, fathers, or sons of the women. Generally they are there to support their partner or mother. Children are a big part of Candora as well as most of the women have young families. Child care is provided on site for the women as this eliminates a major barrier to participation.

Principles

> "We, of the Candora Society of Edmonton are people working together to effect change in our lives and our community."

The mission statement of Candora sounds similar to many community development or educational organizations. What makes Candora different is the way in which the mission statement is carried out. Candora operates under a number of principles which makes it alternative to other educational organizations. One of the foundational principles is that the participants guide the collective. In this way it is participatory, not prescriptive. Because of this, the educational process starts where the people are, not where they should be:

> This kind of educational approach works from the belief that the experts are those people who live the issues and the learning needs to be based on that lived reality.
> (We Are Candora, 1994, p. 37)

For instance, the PACE program is a preliminary pre-employment program in that it does not assume that the participants are ready for the world of work or will be once they have completed the program. Many have obstacles that they need to overcome before they can begin to think about finding a job. The program stresses the development of self-esteem, as well as some employable and transferable skills. It is not simply a skills development course. It is based on a holistic approach that takes the participants' entire lives into account. There is a support network established that continues after the actual program has finished, so that women can turn to others if they find difficulties in their work or home lives. This holistic approach is evident in all the initiatives, as women cannot be compartmentalized from their families or home lives. It is firmly believed that with time and support to overcome barriers, their entry into the workforce or their work within the community will be much more successful.

Giving voice is another important principle within Candora. Many of the women have never been listened to by their families or by people who work for the systems that affect their lives, or have felt too intimidated to speak up. Because of this they feel that they have no control over their lives, no power to change things. By giving voice and taking action on their concerns they begin to build confidence in their own abilities to take control. Their personal power is affected as well as their collective power, or what they can do within the community to improve things for everyone. Giving voice complements the community development principle that Candora is based upon which is the people in the community determine their future.

Equality is important to the women of Candora. The organization is for all women, and all women have an equal opportunity to guide the direction of the organization. This is essential within a multicultural situation. An ethos of respect and tolerance is fostered within Candora to promote a sense of equality.

Another aspect of equality is that of the power of the paid staff. To diffuse this relationship of power a non-hierarchical organizational structure is strived for. This means that the coordinator and the other staff work with the women of Candora and the people within the community rather than for them. They must also be present for the women, rather than for external meetings or obligations. If a member experiences a crisis, she requires help now, not later when the coordinator is free of other obligations.

This overview of the organization and its principles provides a starting point from which to examine the social learning processes within Candora. Because of the nature of the organization, its adherence to the needs and interests of the women involved, it is in continual change. The programs have varied somewhat over the past six years, and they continue to change as new people come and go, as the leadership changes and as external pressures and systems change.

Researcher Involvement With Candora

I had been involved with a research project on community-based program planning at Candora beginning April, 1994. The research supervisor and I conducted a full group interview with the women at one of their Tuesday morning community sessions. I then was involved in conducting interviews with staff and participants over the course of the summer and I facilitated a staff planning day for the paid staff members of Candora. Having come to an understanding of Candora as an alternative organization where social learning was occurring, it appeared to be an appropriate site for my own research. In the fall of 1994, after presenting results from the program planning research, I asked the women if I could continue to be involved with them to understand more about the ways that they learn collectively. My proposal was accepted with warmth and enthusiasm by the women. Although Candora offers a number of programs, I decided to center my research on the Personal and Community Enrichment Program (PACE), which is their main program.

Contextual Issues in the Research Project

Having been involved in the program planning research, I had the advantage of the information from this project, as well as a broader understanding of the organization prior to starting my own research. I am sure being known to the women made my entry into the research situation much easier than if I had had no contact with them previously. There were two other factors that aided in my acceptance as part of the group and my rapport with them. The first was a willingness to include me in all the group's activities. In this way I often became more of a participant than a researcher. My time with Candora occurred over three months, and through the inclusion of the women and staff, I felt that I was part of their community, and in many ways it had replaced the university as my community for that period of time.

The second factor, and certainly the most salient, was the fact that I was pregnant during the time that I was conducting the research. In fact I was still doing interviews and observations right up until my due date! As almost all the women in the PACE program, in which I did my observations, were mothers, they were always concerned about how I was doing and whether the baby would be a boy or girl. Towards the end, they were surprised that I was still showing up on Tuesday mornings considering how big I was getting. My pregnancy gave us a common link, and it certainly made it easier for me to be accepted as part of the group. Although I was still seen as someone from the university, it broke down barriers that would have existed without this link. I was able to develop a special rapport that would not have been possible otherwise. I was still conscious though of my being a white, middle class, educated woman and the biases that this brings to my understanding of the research situation, and the barriers that I perceived that this created in developing a rapport with the women of Candora.

The PACE program was the main program within Candora, and although I had the opportunity to become involved in a number of others, I decided to focus on this particular one because of its potential for collective learning. I was often asked whether I would like to participate in others, such as collective kitchens, a parenting program, or crafts, and I tangled with the observer/participant debate (Bogdan and Biklen, 1992; Reinharz, 1992), but eventually found a comfortable position somewhere in the middle of the two. I did participate in a collective kitchen right from planning the menus to purchasing the groceries to cooking the meals. I chose this activity because of its ability to foster interdependence and to observe the benefits of collectivity.

One area that I felt that I could have developed a stronger rapport with the women was in doing things with them outside of the program. For instance, accompanying them to the food court at the break in the PACE program. However, because this was a smoking break, I did not want to be exposed to the high level of second hand smoke that exists with many people smoking in a small area.

I tried to maintain equal rapport with both the women and the staff, so as not to be seen as being partial to one or the other. Despite the fact that there was a conscious effort to neutralize the hierarchy of the staff, there were still elements of a structured organization. On the one hand, I did not want to appear to have a better rapport with the staff, such that it would hinder my relationships with the women, and on the other, I did not want to appear to be conducting an evaluation of the program and make the staff uncomfortable with my presence. I was conscious of my relationships with all the women in Candora, and of the group dynamics that occurred such that I did not get wrapped up in the politics that were present. This reinforced my observer status.

Data Collection

Data was collected by means of observation, indepth interviews, document analysis and researcher reflective journalling. How each of these methods was carried out will be discussed separately.

Observations

I spent three months, from the end of November of 1994 to the end of February, 1995, observing the Tuesday morning Life Choices sessions of the PACE program. This was a weekly two and a half hour session that was open to all members of Candora and the community. It was a forum for information sharing, planning of community and collective events, setting organizational direction and structure, working on personal and collective goals, and discussing issues and determining appropriate action, among other things. During the observations I took field notes on all that occurred, and then immediately following, or later that same day, I would write up the observations based on my notes. I attempted to be as thorough as I could in noting all that happened during the sessions. I sat at the table along with everyone else, and for the majority of the sessions sat at the end of the table in order to get the best vantage point for observation.

Interviews

Purposive sampling was employed in the interview process. My initial intent was to interview three women, one who had recently become involved in Candora, another who was firmly established as a Candora Woman, and a third who was no longer an active member, but who displayed social learning and action through participation in the wider community in some way. I had hoped that this would provide a cross section of social learning. However, during the course of the field work, this changed slightly. I interviewed one woman who was relatively new to the organization, as well as someone who was quite involved at the time. The third person, however, was not a former member, but was chosen because of her active membership and because she could provide insights into the multicultural nature of Candora. One interview was held with the first woman, two with the second, and one with the third. All interviews were held at Candora and were audiotaped, and they lasted anywhere from half an hour to two hours. I transcribed the tapes verbatim myself and each woman was given a copy of the interview transcript for verification. The interviews were semi-structured in that I used a guide with general questions, then employed probes to encourage further thought and discussion on particular topics. The first interview that I conducted served as a pilot test for the questions, and the interviewee provided feedback on how she perceived the interview and questions. This information was taken into account in preparing for further interviews.

Document Analysis

Documents that were analyzed included such items as a written history of the organization, a board member orientation package, PACE participant evaluations of the program, handouts and minutes from the Tuesday morning sessions, and a PACE orientation book. All gave information about the nature of the organization, and the type of learning that occurred there. The history book was particularly valuable to compare the collective identity and organizational culture between the beginnings of Candora and the present.

Researcher Journals

After I had completed the observation notes, or an interview, I journalled about my impressions, feelings, thoughts and issues that arose between what I was seeing and reading in the literature. It provided me with an avenue to ask questions about the data, and to determine the next step in the process. It proved to be invaluable as a sounding board, especially since I was somewhat distanced from the university at that time because of my pregnancy. It provided me with oportunities to reflect, ponder, and engage with theory, and through this process determine the best route to follow. It is here that I document my decisions about who to interview, what to participate in, and what I think the findings reveal. It is also a chance to deal with the questions and issues that arose for me as a researcher in a qualitative study.

Data Analysis

The constant comparative approach was the primary method of data analysis, along with the contribution of thematic analysis. Analysis occurred simultaneously with the data collection, although the most rigorous examination took place after the field work had ended. The first step in the analysis was that of reading over the initial observations, and reflecting upon them in my journal. This allowed me to be tuned to certain things in subsequent observations, and to begin to think about the most appropriate people to interview, as well as the direction that the interview questions could take. Although I had developed a theoretical framework to outline the problem I was concerned about and to establish the research question, I attempted to bracket this framework in order to prevent it from influencing what I was seeing. Bracketing allowed me to be open to all that was occurring in the observations. Through reading over the field notes, and reflecting in my journal, I began to sense particular themes emerging. I also began to employ a coding system, in my second month, in my field notes as well as in the interviews. The field notes, in particular, were analyzed further to employ a second order, or more abstract coding system to cross check them with my intuitive theme analysis. The interviews and journals were also coded, but not to the same extent. Finally, once the data collection was completed, all transcripts, field notes, journals and documents were reviewed a minimum of two times in an effort to probe for any further insights.

Ethical Considerations

To ensure that ethical guidelines were followed, all participants involved in individual interviews were asked to sign a consent form that maintains confidentiality, but still allows for the data that I gathered from these meetings to be used in the thesis, future articles and conference proceedings. Any part that they were not comfortable with would be excluded from my findings. They were also informed that they could stop their participation in the study at any time. The interviewees were given copies of the transcripts for review. This, along with a presentation on my findings to the whole group in June of

1995, constituted the member checks for the research.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is an issue in qualitative research and was addressed in the following manner in this inquiry:

Credibility

Credibility can be established through such methods as the triangulation of data, persistent observation, peer debriefing, collection of referential adequacy materials, extensive member checks, and establishing structural coherence between the data sources. Within this particular research project, the multi-method approach allowed for the triangulation of data and persistent observation was accomplished through three months of field work. The collection of appropriate documents within Candora allowed for the grounding of a basic understanding of the context and operation of the organization, and finally, member checks were completed with both individual interviewees and the group of PACE participants on the themes that were emerging.

Transferability

Theoretic/purposive sampling, collection of "thick" data and the development of thick descriptions of the context constitute transferability. Within this inquiry, purposive sampling was demonstrated through the selection of the most appropriate individuals who collectively could provide a full understanding of social learning within Candora. Given that the full length of my association with the organization, and the length of the field work for this research project, I was able to provide a rich description of the organization and the processes of social learning.

Dependability

Dependability entails establishing an audit trail such that the report can be audited at the end. My journals document the issues, questions, and decisions that I made as I gathered and analyzed the data.

Confirmability

The issues of confirmability include triangulation, practicing reflexivity through journaling, and arranging for a confirmability audit to be completed at the end. As discussed, the various methods that I employed allowed for triangulation, and my journalling process contained a great deal of reflection on what I saw occurring, whether it was relevant to the study, and if so, how to approach it.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS - SECTION I

What have we learned?

takes lots of patience
be flexible
learning from others
not imposing values on others
honouring other's and our lifestyles
evaluating generating numbers to support financing
challenging or looking critically at mainstream culture
knowing our boundaries - home phone #
together we can change anything
can't be everything to everyone
important to reflect on where we've been to see the difference
stronger
we are who we are regardless of who we work with
don't try to speak their language, tell our truths
people speaking for themselves as opposed to someone speaking for us
experts are the people who live the issues
encouragement/support
trust
teachable moment
holding people as capable
don't give up, try, try
honouring people's choices
(We Are Candora, pp. 43-44)

Two themes emerged in the research that illuminate the process of social learning within Candora. They are learning and action, and support and identity in collectivity. The former, which will be discussed in this chapter, examines the type of learning that occurs and the action that it stimulates. It will also capture the issues of leadership and the influences from within and without the organization that affect the development of democratic capacities. The latter, which is outlined in the next chapter, illustrates the formation of a collective identity and the support network that play fundamental parts in facilitating social learning.

Learning and action

The educational process within Candora is essentially participatory and experiential. There are factors that affect the degree to which participation occurs and the meaning that it holds for the members. The principles outlined in Chapter three provide the overriding philosophy within Candora. As they are alternative in nature, the types of programs that emerge from the women are different from mainstream organizations or programs. The extent to which this occurs though, specifically the type of action that is taken by the women of Candora, is directly related to the degree to which the philosophy is adhered to and carried out. This chapter will provide an outline of the kinds of learning that occurs, particularly as it relates to social learning. Habermas's (1971) types of knowledge will be used as a framework for this discussion. It will then examine the factors that influence the type of learning, the resulting action, and the implication for the development of democratic capacities.

Social learning is a dialectical process of collective reflection and action. It involves dialogue about issues and consensus on the action that will be taken. It fits well with Habermas's (1984) notion of communicative action:

> Communicative action involves a linguistically mediated, intersubjective process through which actors establish their interpersonal relations, question and reinterpret norms, and coordinate their interaction by negotiating definitions of the situation and coming to an agreement. (Cohen and Arato, 1992, p. 435)

In its grandest form, social learning involves critical reflection and action. However, to suggest that praxis is the only form of learning that is involved would be to state only half the truth. The development of other skills and knowledge is vital to the process. Habermas, in Knowledge and Human Interests (1971) suggests that there are three types of learning. They include the technical, practical and emancipatory. The first involves the relationship to the natural world and the way that we learn to manipulate it to meet needs. These are instrumental skills that are necessary in order to function on a daily basis. Communicative learning focuses on understanding and getting along with others. Rather than the empirical means of validating our knowledge that is part of technical knowledge, communicative learning is validated through interpretive means. It is intersubjective and the validity is established through dialogue between two or more people. The third type of knowledge is emancipatory, and this means learning to question the assumptions of the knowledge that is derived through the other two types of learning. Mezirow (1991) suggests that:

> The emancipation in emancipatory learning is emancipation from libinal, linguistic, epistemic, institutional, or environmental forces that limit our options and our rational control over our lives but have been taken for granted or seen as beyond human control. These forces include the misconceptions, ideologies, and psychological distortions in prior learning that produce or perpetuate unexamined relations of dependence. (p. 87)

The social learning process at Candora involves all three categories of learning, although the practical and emancipatory are the primary types, with the instrumental playing a minor and supporting role.

Instrumental Learning

Instrumental learning, which is the first of the three, includes those kinds of things that the women need to know in order to function in a low income world. Especially important are those skills that assist them in providing for their families. Learning to sew, knit and crochet are cost effective means of keeping their families clothed. Learning how to utilize the food that the food bank provides, especially for women who are new to this country and are not familiar with the types of food or cooking arrangements, is a means of providing nutritional meals for their families. Gaining knowledge in making crafts and learning to market them helps them in earning some extra money in order to purchase necessities for their children or themselves. These types of skills assist women in gaining confidence in their abilities to provide for their families. They also learn skills that will make them more employable such as telephone and visitor reception, working as a team, child care skills, or writing reports. Some women hope to learn about specific areas of employment as part of the PACE program. For instance, one woman wanted to investigate native counselling as a possible career, and planned to spend some time with people working in this area. Through this endeavour, she would be able to pick up specific information related to this career. Instrumental learning also means discovering how to juggle family, work, educational and community responsibilities.

Personal development is an area where many learn fundamental skills in overcoming some of the difficulties that they experience. For instance, one woman stated that she learned to take more responsibility for herself through involvement in Candora. Another talked about learning to deal with her emotions more effectively. Exercises to help the women learn more about themselves is part of this process. A member of Candora who was involved the year before and had gone on to continue her education, had returned to do her internship in a career development program. She provided the women with information on careers and the changing workplace, and put on mini-workshops on resumes and job interviews. Other instrumental skills that they learned included studying for their learner's or driver's license and first aid certificates.

Social learning is about making change in one's personal life, as well as the life of the community and within society. Instrumental skills are important here, particularly in learning to take action. Lovett, Clark and Kilmurray (1983) suggests that it is important to teach skills that are required in social action, skills that relate to the management of this process. Heany and Horton (1990) address this as well in their discussion of collective action within the Chicago housing projects. These people learned such skills as running meetings and serving on boards. Similarly, the women in Candora develop skills in organizing events, such as the Family Afternoon. They learn about the needs of maintaining an organization through their fundraising efforts. Another example here includes serving on a committee to provide a short list of potential coordinator candidates to the Board of Directors. They learn such things as goal setting, budgeting and decision-making as part of the PACE program. As Mezirow (1991) points out, instrumental education is a vital part of preparation for social action:

> Educators must beware of placing learners in a vacuum by making them aware of the need for collective source change without helping them acquire the information and skills needed to implement it. (p. 211)

Technical skills are part of the package necessary in making changes for both the individual and the community.

Practical Learning

The second type of learning is practical and this involves learning skills of communication. It is as relevant for filling the vacuum Mezirow (1991) describes above as the technical skills of social action. Communication means learning to understand what others are saying and making ourselves understood, whether it be through the spoken word or other media such as theater, art, television, etc.

> Most significant learning in adulthood falls into this category because it involves understanding, describing, and explaining intentions; values; ideals; moral issues; social, political, philosophical, psychological, or educational concepts; feelings and reasons. All of these things are shaped decisively by cultural and linguistic codes and social norms and expectations.
> (Mezirow, 1991, p. 75)

Much of what happens at Candora provides opportunities for practical learning. One of the cornerstones of the organization is to give the people within the community a voice in their own affairs. This is a process that starts from the very personal and moves to the public. Many of these women were isolated due to the issues that they faced. They felt dominated by the relationships that they were in and/or by the bureaucracies that they dealt with. As a result many did not feel comfortable or confident in expressing their opinions. As one of the former coordinators suggests:

> ...you can put something on the table and say, "What do people think?" And some reaction can occur as opposed to saying, "Well, here it is." There is a danger for people in being honest in those kind of cases. They probably haven't got a lot of reinforcing about that in the past. If they haven't agreed with people in positions of authority, doctors, teachers, in their past, why would they risk it? But here it is hopefully a place that they can do that with us being there to say, "Feel free to disagree," and they have been.

Candora provides them with a safe space in which to begin to talk about their problems, to learn to give voice to their feelings, their joys, pains and injustices. They learn how to express themselves and to communicate more effectively with others. Many women talked about how the skills that they learned at Candora helped them to develop better relationships with their families:

> It has helped me try to be more reasonable with my kids and think about them more often too.
>
> I'm a lot closer to my kids now because I'm more open. I don't keep everything bottled up inside. I talk, and there is always someone here to listen.
>
> I feel more confident with my kids now, working with my kids.I have an older child, he's attention deficit disorder, so I have been dealing with this his entire life. Now I learn more about how to deal with him. He is now 14, and I am learning to be more patient. My personal development, part of my personal development is approaching love and caring at the same time as being patient and being understanding of my own family. I understand my own children better than before.
>
> I used to be the mother yelling at the children, "Hey, come on!" Now I try to control myself better than before.

Some women who experience difficulties with social workers gain insights into dealing with them more effectively. Problems in this area are often a topic of discussion as the women vent their frustration at not being able to "get through" to their workers. These incidents are discussed within the group, and suggestions are made on alternative means of approaching the problem.

Giving voice in public was a new experience for the women, and some women are more reluctant than others because of cultural factors. Some of the Spanish speaking women are reluctant to discuss family problems or issues because of the judgment that may be made upon their families. The outreach workers, in attempting to assist these women and bring them out of isolation, often find that meeting with them on a one-to-one basis, at least initially, was easier for them. From here they may begin to become more comfortable with talking in small groups, once they realize that judgements will not follow.

Once the women begin to talk about their issues, they are often surprised to find that other women have similar experiences.

> It took about five months before I really opened up to anybody and I did not know that each and everyone of us had similar backgrounds. Everybody had abusive relationships, everybody was on social assistance, getting abused by their husbands or boyfriends. I thought that I was the only one that lived like that until I came here, and I didn't feel so alone anymore.

The programs that are offered by Candora both formally and informally provide women with opportunities to talk about their plights. Considering the ethnic diversity of Candora, this spawned a new understanding of others:

> I learned working with women in Candora that all of us are different people. Even if we speak the same language we all are different, we have different backgrounds, different cultural backgrounds. And I learned how to respect these ideas of different people. Some of them are young, some are older and they have different points of view.
>
> When I first came here the Spanish speaking ladies used to sit in one corner. They kept to themselves. Then one day we all got together and asked one of the paid staff why they sit in the corner, why don't they come join us. She said, " Well that is your duty, go and ask them to come and join you." That is all it took. We went up to them and said, " Look, this is getting a little carried away now. You ladies have been sitting by yourselves now, why don't you come and join us?" That was all we had to say. We all joined in and we had a few laughs and we did a few crafts and now everybody is friends with each other. Some of the girls are learning Spanish.

Communicating with others builds the bridges of understanding within the group. They are able to move beyond their range of experience and find out about other cultures and perspectives. This help them when dealing with conflict that arises within the group. Rather than becoming divisive issues, concerns were generally discussed in the group, and some action is taken to resolve them.

The development of communication skills helps the women learn to value their own experiences and voices. They learn to believe in their own worth as their opinions and thoughts are accepted and honoured. They can name their issues, their concerns, and then take action on them, individually at first, then collectively. These dialogical skills help them to speak in front of others within the group, to other organizations, at conferences, at political rallies or meetings, or with funders. Theatre is another means of putting across their message or of gaining insights into other organizations. The women of Candora have used popular theatre in telling their stories and have provided an interested and keen audience for other organizations who are spreading their message. Ultimately the women have discovered ways to communicate more effectively with their families, their friends, and the people that they came into contact with.

Practical skills are important in the operation of Candora as decisions are based on consensus. Communication is imperative in order to continue the work that the organization does. Voicing concerns is the only means of understanding the problems in the community, and Candora brings this philosophy to life by providing opportunities for members to discuss their concerns in all the programs that are offered. Women are involved in setting the direction of the organization, in determining the programs, and in evaluating what occurs at Candora. They learn to express themselves and as such determine the course for the organization in terms of the change that they set out to accomplish.

Emancipatory Learning

The third type of learning that Habermas (1971) provides is emancipatory. This type is different from instrumental and practical in that it questions the assumptions that are behind the first two types of knowledge. It is a dialectical process of knowing what is and determining what ought to be. This occurs through critical reflection upon the assumptions that one holds about what is, or the way one has been living one's life. Once it becomes apparent how the assumptions affect how one goes about life, and how they create challenges to fulfillment, then one must determine what ought to be. A plan of action to move from what exists to the new vision is then thought out and implemented. Once action is taken, and one begins to live the what ought to be, it then becomes the what is, and the cycle continues indefinitely. It is a process of critical analysis and unrelenting or "immanent critique" (Habermas, 1971) upon societal structures. The means of carrying out this dialectical process is through reflection and discourse. Habermas (1984) outlines his notion of an ideal speech situation, that provides a framework for dialogue. It attempts to eliminate the distortions that can occur in communication, and to ensure a rational outcome of discourse.

The women in Candora learn to question the status quo both personally and collectively. Domestic abuse is an issue that many women in the group face, and through critical reflection and discourse, some are able to come to a fuller understanding of their plight. For example, one woman talked about her new understanding of the perpetrators of violence:

> [My experience at Candora] is making me think more about life and what not. And all guys are not that way, mean and beat up on your wife and punch you when you are eight months pregnant.

Other issues were dealt with in this dialectical process. One woman discussed how she overcame the stigma that she carried with her about being on welfare. She changed from feeling depressed about herself because she was on social assistance. She did not ever see herself getting off the cycle of dependency. Her involvement at Candora, however, made her proud of what she is doing. She learned to question the cycle of dependency, as well as the negativity that society places on those who are on social assistance:

> I saw myself on welfare all my life. I've seen it that way probably because of the way I grew up. So much hatred and all this child abuse. You name it. Like that is how I seen myself...I am not afraid to admit that I am on assistance now, which I would have four years ago when I first started. When someone would ask me, "What are you doing?" I would always lie. There were so many lies that I used to tell people that I was trying to make something of myself. And I used to go home and think how I could stand there and look at these people straight in the eye and say that you are trying to get into school, or you are looking for a job, or you are in school. I was just living a lie...But now I can honestly say that I'm not ashamed to be on assistance, not ashamed to say that I do part-time work. It might not be a high paying job, but at least I am doing something. I'm taking courses that will help on my resume and will help with

> what I want to do. I know it will take me another four or six years to really get to where I want to be.

Another talked about changing her perspective on people on social assistance:

> I changed my perspective about issues. When I come, I knew about people living in social services. People being on social services and also getting paid for cash pay. I was the judgemental part of this. Doing a lot of criticisms about this. Now I see the people from my country here, the perspective now is different than how I saw before. It is being more understanding of people and why they do certain kinds of things. Without even know the reason I tried to make my own assumptions about them and this has changed a lot. I feel that I respect more people in thinking too, and I have changed. Instead of being judgemental, I try to help them in the way that I can do.

A Candora woman sums up her experience:

> If it wasn't for Candora I probably would have committed suicide. Candora made me open my eyes and it made me grow up. It is the place to come.

All these examples demonstrate emancipatory learning, where the personal assumptions that the women were living under were questioned, and action was taken upon a new understanding of themselves. This occurred on a collective basis as well, as the women of Candora became advocates for changes within their community. The neighbourhoods of Rundle and Abbottsfield were areas of high crime, vandalism, and family violence. The women began to talk about their fears of living in the community, and began to question why this needed to be so:

> We didn't know anything about the percentages but now we know, we start to ask, why? Why are we here? Why so many poor people in this area? Why in the northeast? We find so many interesting answers. We are here, because in the 1980's the rents were less expensive than

> in other parts of the city and one of the reasons could be that it is because of the pollution; because we don't have the services that other people have. We have unemployment, we have crime, we have family violence. eW have abused children, beaten women, we have alcohol abuse, and drugs. That is what we have. What we don't have is work, programs for people who abuse drugs and alcohol, we don't have programs against family violence, we don't have safety for our children. We don't have police when we call them for help. The police will come only after somebody has committed a crime. No one can do anything to prevent a crime.
> (We Are Candora, 1994, p. 21)

They reflected on the issues of fear and safety, and gathered information about their community. The women walked about their neighbourhoods to determine the physical problems. One woman described what they found: "No good - playgrounds dirty, not enough lights, no police patrol, no security, vandalized cars, etc." (We Are Candora, 1994, p. 11). The members of Candora conducted a community survey to gain input from the residents about their problems and concerns. Not only did the women collect information about the problems, they also wanted to find out why these issues existed. They gathered background information about their area of the city through census and statistical reports from local, provincial and federal government sources. They found that their community was built specifically as a low cost housing area, and that the residential complexes and grounds were allowed to deteriorate because of the elimination of subsidies by government agencies. People living in poverty were able to afford the lower rents in these substandard housing complexes. With the concentration of people living in poverty there were related problems, such as crime and family violence:

> Poverty produces all kinds of social diseases: crime, alcoholism, family violence, social violence, theft, drugs, prostitution, perverts, the abuse of children, etc. These are problems that affect the poor people who live in our community.
>
> (We Are Candora, 1994, p. 23)

Based on all the information the women had gathered, they were able to critically reflect upon their issues. They then approached City of Edmonton officials about the housing situation and the problems associated with it. Some of the things that they accomplished, on a collective basis through voicing their issues, included safer lighting in dark hallways within the complexes, repairs and maintenance on their buildings, clean and safe playgrounds, and recreational spaces for their children. Through this process they changed their views of the community as an unhealthy place to move up and out of, to one in which they could begin to take pride in.

The foregoing discussion on the types of learning provides an overview of social learning within Candora. As Lovett (1988) mused in his book, Radical Approaches to Adult Education, one needs to decide whether collective learning is for individual benefit, or for individual and collective benefit. It is clear that in the case of Candora, social learning is for both. There is a focus on both individual and community development. Through the programs and experiences that the women go through, they develop a sense of their own voice, the kind of action that they can take, and ultimately their own power. It is through this educational process that they develop democratic capacities, and become concerned and contributing citizens. They move out of their cells of isolation to a world that they did not know existed.

Influences on Social Learning

The degree to which social learning and the resultant action occurs within Candora is influenced by a number of factors, including leadership and pressures from external organizations.

Social learning can occur at Candora because of its participatory nature. Its focus is on the learners and what they think should happen within their lives and community, not what bureaucrats or government officials decide should be appropriate. The organization is funded by a variety of government agencies and private foundations. The core funding for the group comes from either provincial or municipal governments. Although it was established with an alternative philosophy, and operates differently from any other organization within the City and the province, it is still influenced by the ideology of the governments of the time. There are always political barriers to hurdle:

> Initially, money for the project was channelled through the Abbottsfield Youth Project. As the project changed, it became possible to seek funding through other government departments. Cathy recalls that one City Councillor, Julian Kinisky said "pigs will fly before the province will pick up funding for this project," but in the end funding was obtained for the Employment Preparation Program that would allow for gradual re-entry into the work place.
>
> (We Are Candora, 1994, p. 13)

The initial name for the project was the Community Advocacy Project. It was given a fair amount of freedom in the way it operated and its goals, but after the first year, the government has been pushing it to become more conformist, and more statistically accountable. The group has resisted, and has been able to push the boundaries of what is acceptable to the government in most cases. However, in 1994 the Department of Advanced Education and Career Development refused to fund their proposal for the Employment Preparation Program, which was their core funding. Candora were unwilling to reduce the program to six weeks as dictated by the government standards, rather than the six months as originally designed. It was felt that this would not give women enough time to work through some of their barriers to employment, let alone attempt to learn new job skills and find employment. The government, with its sharp turn to the ideological right, demanded conformity and thus withdrew funding for anything alternative.

Candora was able to secure some funding from Alberta Social Services for the Personal and Community Enrichment Program (PACE) which became the core funding for the group. Governmental influence is evident here as well, though, in that this program used to be called Community Advocacy rather than Enrichment. The Department would not fund a program with the former name or emphasis. Advocacy is a dangerous word, both rhetorically and literally, to a government bent on silencing alternative views or voices. Advocacy infers alternative views, and a push for a change of power within the political arena. The very space where the development of democratic capacities could be fostered, where discourse could occur, where new visions of reality could be born and action taken, was extinguished in semantic terms. It demonstrates the power of language. Stiking a word from the official vocabulary, makes it much easier to erase the concept. A government commited to preying on the most vulnerable in society is not about to provide them with a forum to generate oppositional ideas. The effectiveness of this campaign was evident in that there were fewer opportunities for the expression of discontent, fewer opportunities for naming issues that were important to the women, and for the reflection and action required as part of social learning. As required by the funders, reports to social workers were required on a monthly basis, and there was more emphasis on personal rather than collective development. This reflects that trend towards individualism within society in general. This is not to say that the women of Candora were not given opportunities to learn collectively, and that the type of learning described in the preceeding section did not occur. The women's words are evidence of the kind of wonderful things that happen at Candora despite what the government would have happen. The principles, the philosophy of the organization remains, but it is continually battered upon by these kinds of external pressures.

The leadership, specifically the coordinator, within the organization is another factor that influences social learning. A strong philosophical bent to working with community, and a keen sensitivity to honouring the women within the collective are necessary traits for the success of such an enterprise. It is also necessary to have an understanding of issues of social justice, and an ability to foster critique and reflection on the structures within society. It can be frustrating work at times, and takes a person who is able to make sense of the chaos of working with individuals whose lives are often in crisis, and who is able to translate that into a learning experience for both the individuals and for collective benefit. The kind of example and tone that the leader sets greatly influences the degree to which each of instrumental, communicative and emancipatory learning can occur. The leader, in this case the coordinator, has responsibility for the functioning of the organization. However, as a collective she must neutralize any hierarchical view of her role, otherwise it allows the women to maintain a position of dependency. The leader needs to foster an environment whereby the women are making decisions and taking action on their own lives and the issues that plague them collectively. This takes time, and as discussed in We are Candora (1994), the group is ever changing as people come and go:

> In the fall, the group went through a complete change over, something that would be typical of the Project in the years to come. Some people went back to school, found work, or moved away from the community. For others, personal problems kept them away. The group was constantly in change, with members flowing in and out. (p. 13)

The leadership for the first six years was relatively stable, with the same coordinator, who exhibited the philosophy and the majority of the characteristics discussed above, and a core group of leaders who had been involved since the organization's inception. Through their experience, they were, over the years, able to take on a number of issues, and assist the women in translating the personal into the political. They used various strategies to stimulate this process. For instance, in order to help the women come to the realization that they are important and worthy, and their voices count, attempts were made to neutralize the power that visitors from agencies or other organizations brought to Candora. During the life choices sessions, visitors were not given special status. As one of the former coordinators stated:

> The other thing we used to do, when we used to meet a bit more formally, like around our employment programs, when we did our introductions... we would go around the room, all of us introduce ourselves, so there really isn't anything special done. When you introduce yourself I might just say that this person is here to talk about whatever. But there is not this whole lauding given to that person that makes some sort of "stand up here above everyone." It's trying to equalize again and give women the opportunity to feel that they have as much dignity and as much right to be sitting around that table as the big shot.

Another method of neutralizing power was to ask the visitors to take a seat around the table like everyone else, rather than sitting at the head of the table.

Another example of a strategy that was used in Candora to stimulate social learning was to emphasize the power of the collective. For instance, when Candora negotiated for funding from government agencies, the coordinator, along with a group of the women, would attend the meeting. This gave the women an opportunity to voice their issues and have direct input into the process. The direct contact with the government workers made it difficult for them to ignore or trivialize some of the women's concerns in the negotiation process.

As stated, community work is difficult and exhausting, and the leaders eventually left the organization. They all left close to the same time. This made it difficult to maintain the kind of emancipatory learning that had occurred, as this is a long term process and requires a constant fostering of critique of social structures. The new coordinator was a professional who had worked within the community. She came to Candora from an agency with a traditional organizational structure, and was interested in trying a participatory approach. The other leadership positions, such as the outreach workers, were filled with women who had been involved in Candora in various ways. Most of them had been there for at least a year. This leadership group did not have the same background and experience as the original leadership group did when Candora was started. Although there were some elements of emancipatory learning fostered by the new leadership, the majority of learning that occurred within the PACE program was instrumental and communicative. The philosophy of the organization remained, but it was much harder for new members to the organization to nurture the same kind of educational environment as those who had been doing it for a number of years. The external influences contributed to this in that the time that could have been spent on reflection and discussion of issues was often used to prepare reports for accountability purposes. The new coordinator did not have the same latitude as the former coordinator in the type of program that could be implemented with government funds. Still, there were long term members who were able to assist with the transition and continue the ideas of the collective.

The influence of external organizations, political climate and leadership have significant impacts on the type of learning and the resultant action that occurs within the group. Both personal and collective action are taken in response to issues that are voiced within the group, primarily as part of the community advocacy focus of Candora. The move to a standardization of programs, a neo-conservative philosophy on the part of government, and new leadership all resulted in a reduction of social learning. Personal development continued to take place, and there was an effort to connect the women to their community through information sharing and encouraging women to get involved in external events, courses or opportunities. The outreach workers were particularly involved in this regard, and were the ones who had the best grasp on the issues of the women. They were committed to working for the benefit of others within the community because of the personal development that they had experienced. They, along with the coordinator and business coordinator, were able to provide for social learning despite the pressures. Unfortunately, the coordinator changed again after only ten months, and the transition period put a hold on social learning again. A sustained effort is advantageous in countering the influences on the social learning process, but Candora has been able to maintain some semblance of its social learning orientation despite the changes that occur.

CHAPTER FIVE

FINDINGS - SECTION II

Support and Identity in Collectivity

The second theme that emerged from the research is that of a notion of collectivity. The women in Candora are immersed in social relationships that help them overcome the isolation that they have been living in, as well as some of the dependency upon government systems. The collective serves as a crucible for the learning and action discussed in the previous chapter. There are two major ways that collectivity is illustrated in the research. The first is the way in which the women constitute a collective identity, and the effects and consequences this has for social learning. The second is the support that the network of relationships offers to the women, and the agency that it fosters. A notion of collectivity is built upon the principles of the organization as well as the motto of "people helping people help themselves." Collectivity provides the women of Candora with a new frame from which to understand who they are individually, as a group, within their community, and in the larger world. The influence of collectivity is demonstrated in the women's own development and the commitment to the organization and its causes.

Collective Identity

The learning processes and developmental activities that the women of Candora experience are couched in a notion of collectivity. Escaping the isolation that so many experience means introducing them to the joys and benefits of interaction with others and a sense of community or collectivity is fostered within the group. The women begin to think of themselves as "Candora Women." In this way they begin to develop a collective identity or a sense of "who we are" as a group. Identity is developed and reinforced in a number of ways. The first is by means of comparisions to other individuals or groups. "When we do something, how is it different from someone off the street doing it?" There is continual reinforcement of the process of identifying issues and taking action on them, or on the ethos of respect, tolerance, care and concern within the collective. They occasionally discuss the fact that they are unique, at least in the City of Edmonton, and express concern about the women in other areas not having choice in the type of program that they attend, or organization that they belong to. The holistic approach to learning that they advocate stands in contrast to those short term instrumental programs that emphasize only specific skill development. Food co-ops, collective kitchens, craft co-ops, a community garden, as well as sponsoring community events are all part of the organization. Through these activities, the women learn to appreciate what working together can do for them, and what they can in turn do for others. Again this is contrasted with the individualistic approaches within mainstream society.

Another method of demonstrating the collective identity of Candora involves identifying how the group functions. This includes the collective development of group guidelines and expectations. Although the staff play a leadership role in facilitating the development of these guidelines, it is generally the members who establish them and have the greatest responsibility for modeling them for new members. There are times though, when the when the staff feel that members are taking things for granted, and in the interests of the organization the staff attempt to reinforce or develop guidelines to ensure the continuation of an atmosphere of respect and concern. The problems are then brought to the women, along with suggested guidelines and a discussion and negotiation is held. This demonstrates the way in which the leadership structure has the ability to assert itself over the circular or flat structure that Candora strives for. New ways of working together or relating do come from the women themselves though, as situations arise that require shared expectations. When new members join the PACE program, the existing guidelines are discussed with them, and they are asked for their input, and whether they agree with them.

One of the reasons that many of the immigrant women come to Candora is to be able to hear and speak English. Besides gaining proficiency in the English language, they also are exposed to the literacy of Candora. Women talk about themselves in a positive light, they learn the phrases that others use in discussing their experiences at Candora. This is evidenced in the fact that the women used similar language, over the course of the year that the research occurred, to discuss their development. The quotes in We Are Candora (1994), which is a history and explanation of Candora, are also similar to the terminology that the women use. This illustrates another aspect of collective identity. They are redefining who they are and how they view their experiences using the language of Candora, not the language of systems. They are not clients and social assistance recipients, but people who have real issues and desires. They are people who have the potential and ability to solve their own problems and take action on issues that concern them. Similar to Freire's (1970) notion of naming the world, these women use language to overcome the oppression that they experience, and reconceptualize who they are. The cultural literacy of Candora also demonstrates the continuity of the group. Although there is a steady turn over of people in various programs, the way they view the world is passed on through this literacy. The main forum for it is during the sessions in which the women discuss their issues and the changes that they have made. A new way of viewing things allows women to reflect and express themselves in ways different from what they are used to, different than the mainstream. It is based on their lived reality and provides them with the words to express issues and concerns that they have. It is a reaffirming and caring means of expression, which gives evidence of the support at work in the collective in overcoming the patriarchal and hegemonic nature of society. As one woman stated in We Are Candora (1994):

> It's helped me with my self esteem. Helped me to overcome a lot of feelings of how I feel about myself, helped me to feel a lot better about me, I've learned to deal with a lot of problems with a calmer manner. I'm able to express myself a lot more. I try to make my opinions stand out, but its hard. (p. 27).

The collective offers the women respite from the labels that they receive from society. Although they express desires to improve their situations, they can feel that what they are doing now for themselves and their families is respected and valued. One woman stated:

> These women don't block you out because you are on welfare, and they look at you as a person. They value things in you that you didn't think that you had.

Despite the humiliation that they experience from being ostracized by the system and society at large, the collective provides them with a space to redefine their identities, and then to assist others caught up in the stigmatization process to overcome it.

The notion of collective identity is combined with action to counteract the effects of society's systems and degradation of women. We have seen, in the literature review, that Cohen and Arato (1992) maintain that social movements require both the identity component as well as attacks upon the sociopolitical system in order to be effective. These attacks by the collective take the form of communicating the issues to other groups and individuals. The outreach workers and other staff are instrumental in this effort. They engage with other organizations dedicated to social changes, such as the child poverty action group. They also work with those in state bureaucracies to advocate for changes to strict prescriptive funding requirements. Candora has developed a reputation for integrity and for very positive outcomes in their work, thus their external collective identity provides them with power in these types of negotiation. They have come to be a known and respected quantity. These negotiations involve not just the staff, but the women who will benefit from the type of programs that are planned. As the group is participatory, the women develop an understanding of what is involved because it is their issues that are being addressed. They are voicing their collective interests in these negotiations and they attend them as the women of Candora. As they undertake these strategies, it reaffirms their commitment to action, and their identification with the collective. In this way, collective identity is an essential element of social learning and the development of democratic capacities.

Internal relationships and group dynamics have an effect upon the collective identity. Candora is built upon diversity and difference, yet women share some common issues that brings them together. In this way it is both inclusive and exclusive. As with any organization there are internal relations that figure prominently and must be dealt with. Despite an ethos of respect and tolerance, within Candora, there are times when some women do not feel included. There are instances of verbal and nonverbal gestures that indicate exclusion. An example of a nonverbal incident of exclusion was the body language, facial expression and physical movement of a chair by one member away from another member who had arrived late and sat down beside her. One woman gave voice to this exclusion during one of the Tuesday morning sessions, suggesting that she did not feel welcome to volunteer for certain things because of what she perceived to be a group with power. This issue was raised during a member check in that one woman expressed that she did not see the group as being open, supportive and accepting.

> You're trying something and the other people put you down because you are trying something for yourself. They want things for themselves. It's hard to deal with these kinds of people because they [think that they] know more

than you.

Despite these sentiments, she felt that she had benefitted a great deal through her involvement in Candora, and conceded that the women had been important in her own development in being able to raise these issues. Still, both these examples demonstrate the way in which group dynamics can affect collective identity and social learning. My journal writings often dealt with this issue of group dynamics:

> What are these unwritten rules? How do they affect learning? I think that I spoke about this before in trying to see how the group dynamics would affect the degree to which group learning would occur. There needs to be a feeling of solidarity for anything to occur. A sense of belonging before people will commit.

If the dynamics are such that people do not feel part of the group, or do not feel safe in the group, their level of identification with the organization and commitment to it is reduced. By extension, the potential for social learning is also diminished.

Power is important in the inclusiveness/exclusiveness issue. Whose issues and visions get put ahead of others? One woman stated that it took her five months to really get involved and feel comfortable with the other women, to become a Candora Woman. Through observation over the course of the year, although there were a core of women who remained with the organization, it appeared that women became involved and then moved on because of other commitments, or they moved from the community. Those who were new when I first became involved in Candora in the spring of 1994, were more highly involved and felt much more comfortable about speaking out by the fall of 1994. They had begun to feel more and more included, as they took a more active part in setting the directions of the organization. As one of the former coordinators suggested, consensus was the way of addressing the interests and needs of the women, and if they were unable to do so for particular women, then they were referred to other organizations. There was a respect for difference to a point, then it was beyond the boundaries that the women had set as their organization.

With a tacit definition of themselves, the women of Candora establish their boundaries. Although there is an effort to be inclusive, one woman described how they were concerned about just anyone walking in off the street. This was prompted by a negative experience of a stranger asking the women intrusive questions about one of their members. One woman suggested that they were more responsive to those women who were referred by or were accompanied by a social worker, or came with someone who was already part of the group. She stated that they were less welcoming with people who simply came in off the street. This is an example of exclusivity in that the group includes those who are similar to themselves when they begin to actually define themselves as a collective or community. This has a negative impact on difference within Candora, yet for the most part it is a welcoming organization. It is apparent however, that group dynamics does affect the level of collective identity, which in turn affects the degree to which social learning can occur. If one does not feel comfortable or accepted, the desire and ability to make change either individually or socially is reduced.

Support Within the Collective

Despite the influences that hinder social learning and a collective identity, there is a strong current of support within Candora. It surfaces in the conversations of women, in the ways that they carry out their obligations and in how they participate. The support within the collective offers women the opportunity to explore new ideas and ways of thinking and living, both personally and as a group. It provides the cushion against the pain that they experienced in attempting to go against the mainstream alone. Support nurtures change within women's lives and within the community.

Women constitute their identities through social relationships. In the isolation that they experience prior to Candora, the women develop their identities through relationships with family members or bureaucracies, where often dominance and submission reign. They are caught both privately and publically in a web of dependency, on family members, specifically husbands or partners, and government agencies. Because of this the women go through life never knowing their own efficacy. At Candora, they experience new social relationships. Ones based on respect, tolerance, care and concern. There is support and a sense of equality which provide the foundation from which they develop a sense of who they are and what they are capable of. Support takes various forms, from open acceptance of each member, to financial support. Emotional support, however, is the mainstay for most. The collective provides a safe place for women to escape and overcome the difficulties that they face. Feeling accepted and supported allows for intersubjectivity to occur within the group. Inclusion is part of the culture of the organization, despite concerns raised earlier in this chapter. Women learn to be tolerant of even the most trying of individuals, understanding that each makes some sort of contribution. Time and time again the women express how this support serves as a motivator for action. It is the prerequisite for both the actual processes of reflection and action, as well as for the development of personal and collective identity. Some of the women share their experiences of personal development and the influence that the support that they receive has upon this process:

> Working at Candora for seven months gave me the courage to go back to school. I didn't think that I could work full time again. Candora helped me develop the self-confidence that I had lost.
>
> Prior to my involvement in Candora I had a really bad attitude. I had given up after my divorce. My sister made me come, and I was nervous, but found everyone welcoming. Now I feel much better. The coordinator really helped me get through a lot.
>
> I agree that the group is really supportive. When I first came [to Candora] I was in the employment preparation program. Now I am taking PACE, and two other courses as well right now. It set me on the right track with myself. It increased my self-esteem. I feel fifty times better about myself than I did before. I used to feel like a piece of garbage, but now I feel like a person.
>
> My views in life have changed. This place and the people here have changed me, they make me look forward to coming here to my job. Like all these courses I am taking, I don't think that I would have gotten myself into something like that if I didn't have any support...[The support] pushes me to do these things, because I know that if I fall down, somebody will hoist me up again. I always have somebody to fall back on and they will push me right back up.
>
> I think Candora is part of solving problems in situations because the environment that we have here is protection and advocacy. And we feel that. This is not just words.
>
> We feel that when we become depressed, someone will ask "why are you depressed, why are you sad?" People try to talk to you and you feel supported in that way too.
>
> I have lived in this community for ten years, and this is the first year I have ever come out. I have met so many different people. Like a lot of them I look up to, and they don't push me, but they try and tell me. I'm glad that they did. In a way I'm glad that they did push me because I wouldn't be doing what I am doing now. I think that I would be locked up at home. They really brought the true me out.

The support at Candora affords various opportunities for the women to move from a negative sense of self to a more optimistic one, to move from inefficacy to agency. Some women had never before been involved in organizations, while others, particularly those who had immigrated from other countries due to political difficulties, have been involved in their original communities, are now faced with finding who they are in a country that does not recognize their former identities:

> A profession is very important, but my five, six, ten years of post-secondary education are not recognized. I have to start all over again, and that is why there are so many talented men and women, doctors, psychologists, lawyers, teachers, working as unskilled labourers for low salaries. I ask myself, were all my dreams shattered; facing unfair treatment, discrimination, lack of opportunities and limited access to services? It is not so easy but I need to stay and do the best that I can in everything that I do. I don't have to prove to anybody that I am superwoman, but I can't let the exile destroy my life. I learned different things while I am involved in Candora and one of those things is that nothing can break my spirit and my principles are now stronger than ever and the fight has not ended yet. I need to win this fight.
>
> (We Are Candora, 1994, p. 17)

Personal identity formation ranges from those who gain a little bit of self knowledge to those whose experience at Candora is truly transformative. One woman describes her experience as transformative:

> My goal was always, I didn't know this until I came here. I didn't know that my goal was to help people, especially teenagers in my situation where there was abuse or alcohol, teenage pregnancies, or kids that were not wanted and nobody ever told them that they loved them...Always being told that I was good for nothing and you'll never amount to anything. That always stuck in my head, always. Back then it was "I don't care about life, I'll just keep having kid after kid. I'll make my own family." Now I have three kids and I think, "my goodness, why didn't I stop at one or two and that's it?" But now I can honestly say, I'm not ashamed to say

> that I am on assistance, not ashamed to say that I do part-time work. It might not be a high paying job, but at least I am doing something. I'm taking courses that will help on my resume and will help with what I want to do. I know it will take me another four or six years to really get to where I want to be.
>
> I have learned so much, but I can't explain it, I can't put it down. But I know I've learned so much. I am a totally different person.

This demonstrates the potential that Candora has as a transformative agent, not only for individuals but also for the collective. One woman described Candora as her "umbligo," which is Spanish for umbilical cord. She sees the support within the collective as a warm and safe haven from the drudgery or terror of day-to-day existence, as a place of nurturance and development. The nature of Candora is one where everyone is valued. This makes it a safe place to begin exploration of self. Once women work through their issues, overcome some of their barriers and gain a better understanding of themselves, they take this personal understanding and attempt to help others through the process. They begin to move from private issues, and see how they are really public ones. They become concerned about the other women in their communities that are still struggling in isolation. As individuals, and as part of the collective, they reach out to others, and in doing so contribute to the notion of collectivity. Two women of Candora discuss their desires to assist others:

> There are many issues that people face. For example, how abusing children that we do in our country is not allowed. To abuse children is allowed there, but here

> [in Canada] it is not allowed. You can slam your kid, you can do whatever you like and for you it is okay and for your family. [Before] I was not interested in helping, but in trying to make my own assumptions about them. Now I try to let people know that abuse is punishable, that people get punished for that. Also to understand that the stress, the stresses that we have, we don't have to put that on our children. Sometimes that is our situation, no jobs, no English at all. Our surroundings, our environment is so reducive, so limited, we don't know about many resources around, how it can solve some problems. All these issues, the only way we can deal with them is abusing our children...Now I try to help people to understand these issues, and try to be more loving and caring. And the things that I didn't experience by my own too. And if I know something, I tell people do you know about these resources, if you have this problem they are available to you...That's what I have learned at Candora through training and sharing with groups, havinga conversation or meeting between different cultures.
>
> I'd never leave this community for anywhere else. I would never move out. I have been here too long, I have seen everybody go through rough times, myself, and I'm still going to see it. I'd never throw it away for a better lifestyle or whatever if I had that chance. If I had my choice. If I ever won a million dollars would I leave the community? No, I'd buy a house right in the community somehwere. I'd buy a house, but I would never abandon something that I want to do in this community.

These quotes illustrate the contributions that these women wish to make to their communities and the commitment that they have. It demonstrates the type of social learning that occurs. These women move out into the community with a self-knowledge and collective knowledge. They are enthusiastic about what Candora had done for them, and they want to show others how it can help them. They have a sense of who they are as individuals, as well as part of the collective. Their commitment to the group, and the potential that it has for change is illustrated through the women's concern about others when the future of the organization was threatened by loss of funding. "What will those women who are not yet part of Candora do if it closes?" They develop a sense of the issues that affect other women, and struggle to make some change, to facilitate personal development for others. They provide the support necessary for others to move out of isolation. They work toward social change and in doing so, they advocate for better lives for the people in the community.

Discussion

Collective identity and support within the collective suggest the importance that being part of a group or community has in making change both personally and collectively. They provide the foundation and structure necessary for personal and public agency. They provide the basis of power from which change can occur. As such, they are fundamental to the social learning process and the development of democratic capacities. This section examines the relation of these findings to the literature. The social movement literature is particularly informative in this regard.

In terms of collective identity, those social movement theorists working from the perspective of identity formation, provide some insight into this process. Although Candora cannot be considered a social movement in and of itself, it is a site of alternative views and actions. As well, given its focus on women's issues, it fits broadly within the feminist movement. Thus, given that it works with marginalized peoples, the social movement ideas about collective identity can shed some light on the Candora situation.

There are a number of elements involved in the development and understanding of collective identity. Johnston, Larana, and Gusfield (1994) provide a good general definition from which to depart:

> Collective identity can be conceptualized at any point in time as a fixed content of meaning, frames of interpretation, and normative and valuational proscriptions that exercise influence over individual social actors. On the other hand collective identity is also an emergent quality of group interaction, which is strengthened by group solidarity and boundary maintenance activities and shaped by public images of the group via interaction with nonmembers. (p. 28).

They suggest that there is both a static and dynamic quality to collective identity. In Candora's case collective identity or the "we" that is constituted within the group, in some respects changes as the group composition changes, but in other ways it stays consistent as long standing members remain to provide some consistency. The principles that guide the organization also contribute in a fundamental way to consistency, yet their very nature facilitates change based on the needs and desires of the women.

Albert Melucci (1989) focuses on the dynamics of social movements, particularly on the interactional aspect of collective identity and states that:

> Collective identity is a product of conscious action and the outcome of self-reflection more than a set of given or 'structural' characteristics...It tends to coincide with conscious processes of 'organization' and it is experienced not so much as a situation as an action. (pp. 10 - 11)

Given this self-reflexive emphasis, Melucci (1989) is concerned with the process of individuals' contributions to the development of a collective identity. He describes it as:

> ...an interactive and shared definition produced by several interacting individuals who are concerned with the orientations of their action as well as the field of opportunities and constraints in which their action take place. (p. 34)

Melucci suggests that individuals make cognitive and emotional investments that are determined through an analysis of the costs and benefits of involvement in collective action. Essentially he looks at the negotiation of the concept of "we", how it is elaborated and given meaning. "Some movement groups are even reflexive about this process - taking time to make the question of "who we are" part of their internal discourse" (Gamson, 1991, p. 40). Melucci's idea is a substantial contribution to understanding collective identity in Candora. The negotiation in Candora around "what we are" comes from the expression of developments, disappointments, and issues. This occurs during the "checking in" time that is held occasionally as part of the Tuesday morning life choices session. There is also an understanding that people come before programs, so checking in happens on an informal basis as well.

Scott, Benford and Snow (1994) are other social movement theorists who have examined the notion of collective identity. Their theory, which draws upon the notion of frame analysis by the symbolic interactionist Goffman (1974), offers some support for the ideas of how the women in Candora differentiate themselves from other groups. Here they adapt the idea of frames from Goffman's text Frame Analysis (1974) and suggest that a frame is:

> an interpretive schemata that simplifies and condenses the 'the world out there' by selectively punctuating and encoding objects, situations, events, experiences, and sequences of actions within one's present or past environments. (Snow and Benford, 1992, p. 137)

They claim that because symbolic interactionism focuses on identity construction through discourse, then it is relevant for the examination of collective identities. They discuss assumptions and attributions which figure prominantly in their analysis:

> A central aspect of the framing process is the avowal or imputation of characteristics to relevant sets of actors within a movement's orbit of operation. Their avowed or imputed characteristics tend to be of two kinds: they assert something about a group's consciousness, or they make claims about aspects of a group's character. In the case of the former, levels or kinds of knowledge or awareness are attributed, values are highlighted, and changes in consciousness are noted or encouraged. The alignment processes of frame bridging, amplification, and transformation are the discursive vehicles through which attributions about

> consciousness are made. In the case of character attributions, specific claims are made about a group's strategic, moral, and cathectic or relational character. Adversaries, for example, are often personified as irrational, immoral, and devoid of compassion and feeling. (Scott et al., 1994, p. 192)

Consciousness and character were evident within Candora. For instance, the idea of a group consciousness was illustrated in the display of approval that the women, who had been part of Candora for a long time, gave to a new member of PACE for taking the initiative on a particular issue. She had demonstrated her new consciousness and she was "acting like a Candora woman." The value systems of the group was another part of consciousness that was illustrated through the discussions on oppression by the current political system and how they differed from that of Candora's. In terms of the group's character, claims were frequently made in Candora that implied a particular moral highground. It was made evident that Candora honoured the women in the group, as well as the community, which was a unique approach in the City of Edmonton. The funders, or government agencies that attempted to force prescriptive frameworks on their programs were at times viewed as adversaries who were not compassionate or caring. The support within the collective that women experienced both during and after they had finished programs was a particular element of Candora that differed from the types of programs that existed in the City.

The action component of the definitions of collective behavior is fundamental in Touraine's (1988) notion of collective identity. He suggests that the recent focus on identity provides a space in which alternative viewpoints can be pressed forward. From a sociological point of view, where the social is imperative, he states that "identity is, then, no longer an appeal to a mode of being but the claim to a capacity for action and for change. It is defined in terms of choice and not in terms of substance, essence or tradition" (p. 81). Essentially he means that action is inherent in claiming an identity because it speaks out against the mainstream. It opens up a space for making choices about identity. He also talks of the elements that constitute a social movement that would both "restore life to collective action and lock it up behind the walls of sectarianism." There is a balance between articulating an identity based on action and development versus one based on essentialism. This particular definition rings true for some of the contradictions that emerge from the research on Candora. The women are inclusive, yet at the same time exclusive. As they develop a community of learners, they find similarities, and once these similarities are articulated, the group begins to exclude others. This dynamic will be discussed later in this chapter.

These definitions provide direction for understanding collective identity in Candora. The discussion on what emerged from the research can be informed by the self-reflexivity of Melucci (1989), the action orientation of Touraine (1988), the counsciousness and character ideas of Scott, Benford and Snow (1994), and the dual prescription of Johnston, Larana, and Gusfield (1994). This is not to say that these definitions provide a full picture of what is occurring within Candora, but offer a sociological framework from which to view this phenomenon. Again, as Candora is not a true social movement, but one alternative organization, some of the implications of the definitions, particularly as they engage ideas of a larger social phenomenon leading to structural change, are not entirely relevant. What can be gleaned from these definitions is that they provide some way of examining what is occurring in Candora as a collectivity, or as part of associational life. It helps in understanding the dynamics involved in collective identity, and ultimately in social learning processes.

Identity formation is one aspect of the notion of collectivity within Candora. Support within the collective is another aspect that illustrates the importance of social interaction and relationships. They are interrelated processes and demonstrate how the collective nurtures the individual, who in turn becomes part of the collective and contributes to solidarity. Literature from adult educators working within the feminist movement provide some insight into support within the collective. Their perspective is important in understanding what is occurring within Candora. Hart (1992) has examined the notion of support within the group and the potential that it has for learning in general. She suggests that:

> From the perspective of a productive educational process, validating subjective experience and engaging in a relationship of empathy are not simply abstract moral imperatives, but structural requirements for the educational process to be successful...(p. 194)

In this instance, support is a key element in the success of the learning endeavour. This is borne out in Candora's philosophy. The organization provides support to women both during and after any formal or informal programming that they experience at Candora. This is one area that makes Candora unique, the fact that support goes beyond the program into their home, community and work lives.

The notion of support corresponds with Thompson's (1988) understanding of the life-sustaining relationships that women find with each other in feminist education and meetings. She suggests that women's support networks are made invisible in society because of the power of male definitions of reality in our culture. She is inspired by the way in which women's groups reject this definition:

> And yet once these connections [of friendship and support] are made visible and acknowledged - often, in my experience, in the context of feminist education groups and meetings - the sense of men's significance evaporates. It becomes possible to imagine other ways

> of living. (Thompson, 1988, p. 199)

This is exactly what the women in Candora do. They imagine other ways of living where they are not dependent upon family or government agencies. This quote explicates the dynamic between support and identity within the collective. It is through the support that the women receive in expressing their ideas and in overcoming their problems that they are able to change their identities as dependent or submissive persons. They contribute to the new image of who they are individually and collectively. In terms of overcoming the patriarchy of their lives, one of the Candora women concurs with Thompson's (1988) sentiments:

> I think if there were men involved here they would try and take charge, what they do everywhere else. It wouldn't be fair to the ladies because this is where we come to bare our souls, to talk to each other about our problems. To try and talk to a man about something that he would not understand would be funny. He's got no knowledge of what women go through.

The women of Candora bare their souls about issues that are of concern to them as women, such as trying to raise their families and keep them fed, family violence, unemployment as a single mother. The support network provokes them to see that their reality does not need to be defined by the systems that often hold them hostage in isolation. The individualism that pervades society's messages to them and is part of their systemic difficulties, suddenly stands in sharp contrast to the benefits of collectivity. A new way of living, a new definition of who they are becomes their reality.

Two other issues that arose in the research can also be examined from a feminist perspective. They include the notions of inclusion/exclusion within the collective, and of power. Yeatman (1994) and Young (1990), writing from a poststructuralist feminist point of view, discuss inclusivity and exclusivity within community. Young (1990) in particular addresses the idea that the development of a community implies exclusion. There is an orienting notion or set of needs that bring people together, but as they form a group, they exclude others. She writes:

> Deconstruction, which I rely on in this chapter for my critique of community, shows that a desire for unity or wholeness in discourse generates borders, dichotomies, and exclusions. I suggest that the desire for mutual identification in social relations generates exclusions in a similar way. A woman in a feminist group that seeks to affirm mutual identification will feel and be doubly excluded if by virtue of her being different in race, class, culture, or sexuality she does not identify with the others nor they with her. A desire for community in feminist groups, that is, helps reproduce their homogeneity.
>
> (Young, 1990, p. 301)

This sheds light on the examples of verbal and nonverbal exclusion that was discussed earlier. Despite an ethos of acceptance of difference, the women still appear to be more comfortable with those who are similar to who they are, both in circumstance and in behavior. This runs against the grain of an open and accepting organization and must be problematized continually in order that the balance does not swing too far towards exclusion.

The woman who suggests that she felt excluded because of a perceived group with power indicates the need for power to be thematized within the collective. Ellsworth (1989), Luke and Gore (1992), and Lather (1991a) all suggest that this is necessary in order for difference to be respected and for all participants to benefit from an educational experience. It needs to be continually addressed in order for the egalitarian nature of Candora to exist and to prevent the fragmentation of the collective identity. Is it possible to have a collective identity built on acceptance and respect for tolerance for all without losing a sense of who they are as a group? Again this is the negotiation that Melucci (1989) refers to in his definition of collective identity. It also appears that the poststructuralist feminists such as Young (1990), Yeatman (1994), Lather (1991b) and Weedon (1987) offer some insight in this regard. They would suggest that identity is never fixed, therefore, there is a continual re-alignment of who they are - a continuous negotiation which allows for the shifting nature of a collective identity.

With an appreciation for the issues discussed above, the women of Candora see themselves as embedded within, yet unique and apart from, the rest of the community or society. Their understanding of themselves is based on their ability to affect change both personally and collectively, and there is a self-reflexive element to this process. As in the previous theme of Learning and Action, the development of identity and the support within the collective is influenced by a number of factors. It is the balance between inclusion and exclusion, between stability and change that must be negotiated at all times in order to provide a safe environment for women to begin their own process of identity formation, and of that of the collective. This balance has been borne out in the continual change within Candora, yet adherence to the principles of the organization provides the constancy within the organization.

CHAPTER 6

ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

The research question posed at the beginning of this project asked what can we learn about social learning processes within a women's collective that will contribute to an understanding of critical adult education's role in the defense of civil society. The themes of Learning and Action and Support and Identity in Collectivity that emerged from the research on Candora provide a picture of social learning within this particular instance of associational life. This is a space for the development of democratic capacities and for personal, collective and community change to occur. As an alternative organization, Candora nurtures the social learning processes that are imperative in the defense of civil society, and ultimately of the lifeworld, but there are some contradictions within Candora itself that make this difficult. These concerns will be highlighted within this concluding chapter. The research also provokes some broader issues, primarily concerning the theoretical departure point in understanding and responding to the problem of the colonization of the lifeworld. There are some epistemological concerns that are best addressed from a feminist perspective. For instance, feminist theories provide some thoughts on the notion of private and public and where the disenfranchised women of Candora slip through the cracks. Citizenship is a concept that is built upon this dualistic split, and also needs to be examined more closely from a gendered point of view. Besides the issues that emerged from the findings, there is also an issue regarding the methodology employed in this study. This final chapter examines each of these issues and concerns, then discusses the significance and implications of this project.

Research involves structure, process and content. Although the findings, or content is often what we are most interested in, the structure and processes within the project cannot be overlooked as a strong foundation provides for trustworthy findings. In examining the structure of this research project, one is struck with an apparent contradiction. On one hand, there is a substantial theoretical framework that is used as the departure point for understanding the problem. On the other hand, the methodology is that of a case study. The former would assume a deductive analytical process, while the latter utilizes an inductive process. I explain and overcome this contradiction in two ways. First, I have worked hard at understanding the abstract concepts that provide the background for the problem of the marginalization of critical forms of adult education. Without engaging social theory and developing this theoretical background, it would not have been possible to establish the research question for this study. Thus, a framework was necessary for understanding the problem, but this does not mean that I was expecting to fit the data to the theory. Second, as a researcher concerned with developing a thorough understanding of what was occurring in Candora, I bracketed the theoretical framework, to the best of my ability, during the data compilation and analysis phases. I listened carefully to what the women were saying and allowed the data to speak for itself and for the themes to emerge from their words. This was not always an easy process, and I was continually questioning whether I was imposing the framework onto what I was seeing. Realistically, one is never able to completely divorce oneself from the framework, but I consciously worked at bracketing it so that I could hear what the women were saying. Following the data analysis, as I was interpreting the findings, the theoretical framework assisted me in identifying the issues that were relevant to the research question. Without the theoretical framework, I would not have been able see and understand some of the things that came out of the research. This apparent contradiction was the only issue that emerged in the structure and process of the study, but there were other constradictions related to the content or findings. These are outlined below.

The two themes of Learning and Action and Support and Identity in Collectivity illustrate the ways in which social learning processes are different from other educational processes. Skill development, and technical and communicative learning are still occuring, but the Candora example demonstrates the emphasis on taking action on problems, and the need for reflection on assumptions, which shows its critical orientation. It also highlights social relationships as being invaluable to the process of becoming efficacious and overcoming difficulties. Although other educational processes or programs may promote change for the individual, the social learning processes go beyond self to community. This is not to say that traditional educational programs do not promote some sense of community, but they are couched in a system that promotes individualism, so any construction of social change that results could simply be due to unintended consequences of appropriate circumstances. The holistic orientation of social learning, however, means that each part of our lives are interconnected and cannot be isolated. In the same vein, we are not independent of one another. Isolation has not served the women of Candora well, and it is through the social relationships in the civil space that they have created that they are able to tackle their issues. Essentially they are taking action to move from dependency to independence through interdependence.

Despite the positive and inspiring findings in the research, there are contradictions that serve to lessen the impact. One of the most obvious contradictions is that of the ties that this organization has to government funding, and thus the influence that is exerted in shaping the content, processes, and in some ways the culture of the organization. Provincial funding has decreased throughout the last few years at Candora, and the philosophical direction of the government has changed its emphasis. Although never fully understood as a community development organization dedicated to personal and community betterment, the latitude that it has been given by the government has been chipped away over the years, to the point where even the names of programs must be consistent with government policies, not with community needs or desires. Although there is funding from private foundations, the bulk of Candora's finances comes from the province. The organization has emancipatory aims, but its reliance on government monies makes this difficult. It must therefore work with the system, yet at the same time push and provoke the system, an agenda that takes time and energy away from their work within civil space. How critical can it be with such strong strings attached, especially in recent years? How can an organization that is based on collectivity and the building of social relationships really escape the individualistic doctrine of the present direction, not only provincially, but globally? Last, but most significant, can an organization with such ties really be considered part of associational life when most women at this point in time are referred by governmental social service agencies, particularly for the PACE program? Rather than a true voluntary organization is it part of the state or the political sphere that, as we shall see, reinforces their client status? These are difficult questions. Still, women may become involved in Candora through official channels, but once there become swept up in the culture of the organization and become a Candora Woman by means of involvement in programs, and also through volunteering in various capacities. It is this voluntary current, along with the emphasis on participation in setting the direction that are fundamental to the organization and that qualify it as being part of associational life. It is a place where dialogue and reflection can occur, and ultimately the development of democratic capacities, despite its apparent close association with the state.

Leadership is key in determining the level of social learning that will occur. An individual with a critical orientation and a desire and ability to work in the chaos of participatory education is fundamental to maintaining an organization that reflects alternative views and promotes social learning. Honouring and being present for the women and their needs is important along with an ability to foster reflection and dialogue, sometimes in situations where the range of abilities of people engaging in this type of process varies greatly. The confidence to work outside of the system is another requirement, in that one must be able to generate a continuous questioning of how things are, which quite often reflects upon the funders. This can be a tenuous situation, in that attacks upon the funders can result in a loss of funding, thus the coordinator/leader must be able to walk a very fine line, especially in these times. Essentially the coordinator/leader must see adult education as a vocation, rather than simply a job (Collins, 1991, 1995). Without this type of commitment with its emphasis on participation and on critique, both the women and the community lose out. Rather than being focused on collectivity, the organization could fall into an emphasis on individual change to fit established societal roles.

This leads to another contradiction within Candora. Although the women are developing a new sense of themselves both individually and collectively, they are still very interested in becoming part of the mainstream. The new identity that they construct is a way of coping with their present circumstances and frames it in a positive light rather than negatively. Although they develop a collective identity that respects who and what they are at this point in time, it does not necessarily lead to a complete change in the way that they view society, or in a permanent change in how they would lead their lives in the future. These changes could be shortlived, or they may remain with the women long after they leave Candora. As well it does not necessarily lead to change within the structures of society. In this sense the programs at Candora can be considered more reformist than transformist.

Is associational life more oriented towards reform than transformation? Habermas (1987) certainly felt that it was social movements that would be the agents of transformation within society. Although others, including Cohen and Arato (1992), Welton (1993) and Finger (1989), tend to agree, they leave room for other parts of civil society to play a role in transformation as well. Cohen and Arato (1992), still drawing on Habermas, suggest that the dualistic character of the institutions of civil society means that other parts of civil society are equally able to bring about change:

> The third thesis [of Habermas] insists on the two-sided character of the institutions of our contemporary lifeworld, that is, the idea that societal rationalization has entailed institutional developments in civil society involving not only domination but also the basis for emancipation. The dualistic theory of society thus places the core elements of civil society - legality, publicity, civil associations, mass culture, the family - at the heart of the discussion. (p. 525)

Here they suggest that it is not only social movements that have the potential for change, but that there is emancipatory potential in all institutions within civil society, including associational life. It is evident that

Candora is a possible space for this to occur. Cohen and Arato (1992) talked about the defensive strategies that need to be employed in civil society to maintain existing spaces for democracy and to create others in an effort to prevent further intrusion by the economic and political world. Already these intrusions are evident within Candora as the pressure from governments calls for increased accountability in the design and time lines of the programs. This may mean that the organization, in order to continue to exist, will become more of an individual treatment model with less emphasis on the collective and community. It may also mean that this particular space closes as a public space. But the democratic capacities that were developed by those involved in the organization will not necessarily disappear. Many of those benefitting from the social learning processes that Candora facilitated still reside within the community, and as such can contribute those skills to creating other spaces, or by passing on their way of knowing the world to others. They have gained an understanding of power in their own lives, and through Candora have learned to make it work for themselves and those around them. In light of the systemic encroachments into civil society at present, the emancipatory potential can come out of the agency of those who have been engaged and enlightened in Candora's participatory brand of democracy.

Cohen and Arato (1992) also discussed offensive strategies. Here, attempts are made from civil society to create spaces for democracy within the economic or political spheres. Candora has attempted to reinforce their participatory and collective method of operating with those in government agencies. Although some individuals have been receptive, and in fact one suggested that Candora is an example of where the government would be in the future, there has been no or little change in this direction. Despite the contradictions that exist, Candora can be considered a civil space for democratic action. The women, through their involvements in the organization and community learn to become contributing citizens. This is a fundamental part of social learning. Their agency and idea of citizenship is, however, not necessarily recognized in society, first because they are women, and second because most of them are single mothers on social assistance. This has implications for how the women of Candora can actually change their situation. Fraser (1989), as discussed briefly in the literature review, provides a gendered re-read of Habermas's dualistic split between lifeworld and system. In particular she illuminates the relationships between the public and private spheres and the effect Habermas's conception of worker and citizen has for women. Essentially she believes that it is gender blind, and thus, the contributions that women make in childrearing and community activities is completely ignored, as are the connections for women between worker, consumer, citizen and client. Emancipation cannot occur for women within a patriarchal private and public system. Fraser (1989) states:

> In short, the struggles and wishes of contemporary women are not adequately clarified by a theory that draws the basic battle line between system and lifeworld institutions. From a feminist perspective, there is a more basic battle line between the forms of male dominance linking "system" to "lifeworld" and us.
> (p. 137)

Can the women of Candora become workers and citizens? Surely it appears that their efforts are to move from social assistance to become economically self-sufficient. But as single women with families, they are defined as clients. Are they caught in a never ending web of patriarchy, both privately in their homes, and publically as social assistance recipients, as long as they hope to enter the mainstream? It appears that their construction of identity alone will not sustain them without some sort of political action. One of the former coordinators at Candora suggested that the women needed to focus on what they knew, on what they could do, such as cooking and sewing and working with children and others, rather than trying to compete in technical fields where where they are so far behind their competition anyway. As workers then, they need to push to redefine the role, to include childrearing. Hart (1992, 1995) in her thesis on motherwork, makes suggestions to this affect, to include childrearing as part of the work that is done in society. It would not be taken for granted, but placed on the same level as work within the official economy where workers are paid. She promotes the notion that childrearing is not reduced to second class status, but as important as any other work. Fraser concurs with this:

> Finally, this reconstruction of the gender subtext of Habermas's model has normative political implications. It suggests that an emancipatory transformation of male-dominated, capitalist societies, early and late, requires a transformation of these gendered roles and of the institutions they mediate. As long as the worker and childrearing roles are constituted as fundamentally incompatable with one another, it will not be possible to universalize either of them to include both genders. Thus, some form of dedifferentiation of unpaid childrearing and other work is required.
> (Fraser, 1989, p. 128)

This is controversial and other theorists, such as Cohen and Arato (1992), suggest that such a move would push these roles to low wages and permanently enshrine them as lower status activities within the economy.

Like the role of worker, the role of citizen becomes questionable from a gendered perspective. As citizens, the women of Candora, and of other women's organizations, need to push to change the role to one that recognizes the contributions that they make to the community through involvement and activities. This would change it from what Fraser (1989) sees as that of the soldier-protector role and one where the public sphere is dominated by the male-dominated dialogical patterns. She states:

> Similarly, as long as the citizen role is defined to encompass death-dealing soldiering but not life-fostering childrearing, as long as it is tied to male dominated modes of dialogue, then it, too, will remain incapable of including women fully. Thus, changes in the very concepts of citizenship, childrearing and paid work are necessary, as are changes in the relationships among the domestic, official economy,state and political public spheres.
>
> (Fraser, 1989, p. 129)

Citizenship is more complex than simply the issues of dialogue and the soldier-protector role. Yeatman (1994) outlines the notion of citizenship from a liberal, a conservative and a welfare state perspective and demonstrates how they exclude women. In terms of the liberal viewpoint, citizens must find what they have in common in order to develop a public authority that ensures that their rights are protected. As they identify their commonality, anything that is particular or idiosyncratic about them as individuals, which is their social or private side, is excluded from this notion. As women have traditionally been part of the private side of the male property owner, they have been excluded from being citizens. Yeatman (1994) develops her thesis on the ways in which the rationally oriented individual brackets out any differences that he has in order to construct a state that ensures the rights of the individual. This state is built on reason and reason alone, so it precludes anything other than the rationally oriented part of life.

Along these same lines, Dietz (1992) summarizes the liberal notion of citizenship to be one less focused on a collective political activity and more on individual's rights to pursue activity in the marketplace. In terms of liberalism's influence on women, she quotes Mary Shanley:

> While liberal ideals have been efficacious in overturning restrictions on women as individuals, liberal theory does not provide the language or concepts to help us understand the various kinds of human interdependence which are part of the life of both families and polities, nor to articulate a feminist vision of 'the good life.' Feminists are thus in the awkward position of having to use rhetoric in dealing with the state that does not adequately describe their goals and that may undercut their efforts at establishing new modes of life.
> (In Dietz, 1992, p. 67)

Dietz concurs with Shanley here and suggests that an ideal of citizenship built on liberalism privileges the concept of rights and the pursuit of economic activity, and provides no place for alternative views based on civic activity or participatory democracy.

Yeatman (1994) sees the republican perspective as equally limiting to women. Although it emphasizes participatory democracy, and here Yeatman illuminates Habermas's relationship to this viewpoint, reason is the means through which individuals qualify to become citizens. As reason is thought to be universal, it excludes those who come from a different perspective. She writes:

> Republican discourse depends on a vision of a substantive civic community that is achieved through rational consensus. This is a participatory ideal of citizenship, where citizens are accorded responsibility for the life and health of the self-determining polity. Habermas develops the participatory democratic values of the new left, and gives new life to republican discourse, when he theorizes the conditions for communicative interaction

> unconstrained by domination, and thus able to assume genuinely dialogical qualities. However, as Iris Young and other feminist critics have remarked, the regulative ideal of this participatory and dialogical process is a monocultural reason. Habermas assumes that rational process will lead to consensus. This assumption is possible only if substantive differences are bracketed out of this dialogical process, for such differences introduce a necessarily irreducible plurality of perspectives - reasons rather than reason, to paraphrase Lyotard.
>
> (Yeatman, 1994, pp. 84-85)

This conception of reason in discourse brackets out all other perspectives, particularly women and other minorities that are considered nonrational. This precludes their status as citizens.

The welfare state position on citizenship is also exclusionary to women and is based on the same principle of bracketing all but the rational aspect of our lives. As such, those who can participate in the singularly rational manner are considered citizens, and those who cannot, or are oriented in a relational manner to their world are deemed dependent. The welfare state system is designed to handle these dependents and reinforce their dependent status upon them.

Fraser (1989) discusses the requirement for a change of focus in the way that the welfare state goes about its business. Instead of the prescriptive policies that it advocates, ones which diminish women as citizens, a politics of difference and of need interpretation is imperative. Yeatman (1994), writing from a feminist postmodern perspective, agrees with the need for such change. Her discussion on the flexibility of the Australian model of social services is instructive here. In this instance, the programs are not prescriptive, but emerge through negotiation with the government agencies and more importantly the people who are affected. The key here is that it emerges out of the context of the moment, not out of a predetermined plan, or a particular perspective designed by the agencies. In this way, respect is accorded those who suffer difficulties, and solutions are sought with their input and implementation. It is based on participatory democracy. A feature of the poststructuralist perspective is that it allows for difference and for new ways of solving problems to occur. It is not based upon the notions of citizenship that are inherent within the liberal, conservative or welfare state traditions.

Much of what occurs at Candora contradicts the societal notion of worker and citizen. Thses are areas where the women have redefined their own realities to ensure that they are meeting their own needs. As workers, childrearing is mixed with economic activities they might pursue such as homebased businesses that allow them to maintain their childrearing activities as their first priorities. As citizens they hold community events, identify community issues and work to make their communities healthier places for themselves and their families. They come together to discuss their issues, and Candora becomes a public space, a space for democracy to occur.

Given the foregoing discussion on public and private, and on their consequences for citizenship specifically, how does the theoretical departure point of Cohen and Arato (1992), who base their work on Habermas, fare? Are the Habermasian ideas of the split between lifeworld and system, and of communicative rationality appropriate to build from for critical adult educators? Certainly the feminist critiques have called his ideas of discourse and rationality into question. Both of these issues are important when analyzing social learning within Candora.

Rationality is a big factor for the women of Candora. Their lives are relational, emergent and flexible. They do not solve their problems by bracketing the issues in their personal lives. Candora is a place for the very expression of these issues, for the expression of who they are and how they live. Their dialogical process takes all this information into account, and although there is some exclusion of others as they build a collective identity, it is relational. Their patterns of discourse include, but do not necessarily follow the ideal speech situation, and certainly elements of exclusion that do occur illuminate the problems with assuming that power relationships are equalized. The rational system that brackets nonrational, nondialogical and emotional means of expression, does not work for them. There are instances of exclusion because power is not problematized. The systems that they try to work with do not appreciate or allow for the relational component to exist. Yet Candora is built upon it. Candora allows for difference, that is why the multicultual aspect works, why there are so many different women there. Their common element is isolation, and they often work from that frame, but what is also common is how that experience is different for each of them. There is commonality, but there is respect for difference. Although it is murkey and sometimes unintelligible, there is a dynamic that is occurring in this organization. There is something beyond the notion of citizenship that is defined by the liberal, conservative and welfare state. They are setting an example of what can be. The social learning that occurs, the learning and action and the collective support and identity allows for this new version of citizenship to occur. It is an example, albeit not perfect, of what can occur.

Cohen and Arato (1992) then, do provide an appropriate departure point with their understanding of civil society. They build from a Habermasian idea of the dualistic split between system and lifeworld, and drawing on some of the critiques of his work, attempt to develop their own theory of democracy within civil society and their relationship to the economic and political spheres. Although they do take some of the feminist perspectives into account, particularly the critiques by socialist feminists such as Fraser, their theories could certainly be further informed from the various feminist perspectives. They advocate a fourfold emphasis in promoting the democratization within both civil society and the political and economic systems. The first is that of a politics of identity which allows for the "redefining of cultural norms, individual and collective identities, appropriate social roles , modes of interpretation, and the form and content of discourses" (p. 526). The other three forms of political will extend into the political sphere in an attempt to create change within it that affect the institutions within civil society:

> A "politics of inclusion" targets political institutions to gain recognition for new political actors as members of political society and to achieve benefits for those whom they "represent." A "politics of influence," aimed at altering the universe of political discourse to accommodate new need-interpretations, new identities, and new norms, is also indispensible. Only with such a combination of efforts can the administrative and economic colonization of civil society, which tends to freeze social relations of domination and create new dependencies, be restricted and controlled. Finally, the further democratization of political and economic institutions (a "politics of reform") is also central to this project.
>
> (Cohen and Arato, 1992, p. 526)

As they draw upon Habermas in their theory, Cohen and Arato are not able to accommodate the relational and power dynamic aspects within Candora. Given the nonstatus of the women of Candora within society at present, as illustrated by feminist critique, working within the present definition of worker and citizen appears to be difficult and in some ways ridiculous. Instead, women must continue to work on their own ideas of how things could be done, their own construction of reality, and implement that within their own situations. They must also work towards making changes in the political and economic systems to provide for equal recognition and status within society. The socialist feminists have been instructive here.

The poststructuralist feminists, such as Ellsworth (1989), Lather (1991b), Yeatman (1995), and Weedon (1987), though, have also shed light on the dynamics within the organization, both in terms of power and voice. Power relationships exist beyond the patriarchal system, that feminists attempt to reveal, and pervade every situation including those considerate in providing an environment of equality. Power must be constantly problematized in order to construct such an organization. With a continual critique of power and its distorting effects on communication and relationships, the needs and issues of all involved can potentially be revealed. The other thing that the poststructuralists provide is an opportunity for all voices to be heard. Yeatman (1994) in particular discussed the ways in which the women's voices could count as much as the state's in ensuring that their needs are taken care of. The problems these women experience to full participation in personal and public life, and the ways that they go about solving them can best be understood from a variety of feminist perspectives. They illuminate the barriers caused by gender and power that create the women's difficulties.

The social learning that occurs in Candora has reduced the pathological effects upon civil society, or the arena of symbolic reproduction. Fraser (1989) suggests that through the colonization of the lifeworld, symbolic reproduction functions are mediated through bureaucracy and money. When this happens, the socialization and solidarily that is constituted through the lifeworld is cast aside in favour of "position[ing] people as strategically acting, self-interested monads" (p. 130). Clearly the women of Candora have learned to overcome the system driven isolation that characterized their poverty striken lives, and to partly overcome the system driven notion of a middle class lifestyle of individualism. The power of their dialogically mediated identity allows them to create their own systems to an extent. It allows them to overcome the intrusions despite the constant effort on the part of the systems. In this way, the social learning process has contributed to the defense of civil society, although there are numerous instances of intrusions, both on the women's conception of themselves and society. Still, the safety, the potential that the collective can offer them dissolves some of the potency of these encroachments.

Significance of the Thesis

> Dialogue and communicative action oriented to reaching a consensus in an uncoerced and free exchange (study circles, tutorial classes) has always been historically pivotal to the adult education movement; the presence of dialogical moments in associational life in the lifeworld has not been adequately theorized by adult educators, however.
>
> (Welton, 1995, p. 136)

What have we learned about social learning within this women's collective that can contribute to critical adult education's efforts to defend civil society? We have been able to examine the educational process, the dialogical moments within an alternative organization, to determine what type of learning is occurring, and as importantly, what influences either enable or constrain it. The study has also pointed out the nature of collectivity, how it contributes to identity formation, and how essential support is to the whole process of social learning. The notions of exclusion and of power are key issues in the development of collectivity. Learning and Action, and Support and Identity within Collectivity are not new, or surprising results from such a research project. The first theme has been identified by various theorists examining emancipatory education, beginning with Freire (1970). The second has been a subject examined primarily by social movement theorists and feminist theorists, particularly the issues that arise from it (exclusion and power). This thesis does not necessarily extend theory then, but part of its significance is that it contributes to the badly needed pool of empirical studies on social learning. It attempts to ground the theory in practice. The more examples of social learning that we have, and the more we are able to understand about context, contributes to our understanding of how institutions are either educative or miseducative. This affects our ability, as Kastner (1994) suggests, to either work with social movement theorists and others who are concerned with social learning processes, or to be contested by them, over our own educative turf. It affects our ability to contribute to the defense of democratic spaces within civil society.

Besides the empirical part of the study and its contribution to adult education, the thesis is also significant in that it begins to engage the social theorists that are concerned about civil society. In this way, it contributes to the field in making social theory more accessible to adult education. It engages a variety of theorists, from Habermas, to social movement theorists such as Melucci, to feminist poststructuralists like Young, in demonstrating that adult educators do not exist in isolation from the broader social world. We need to have an understanding of what is occurring in these disciplinary and theoretical discourses in order to ensure that our discourses are relevant and worthy of notice by theorists interested in learning as a means of social change.

Implications of Research

A number of implications for critical adult education can be derived from this research. Some are direct statements from this research project, and others suggest areas for further study. As they have all been discussed within the text of the thesis, they will be briefly identified and outlined in this section.

First, despite the influences upon it, collectivity, and the intersubjectivity that it fosters, provides the context for the oppressed to learn about their oppression, and about the uses and abuses of power. It is also the necessary element for the process of learning and action to occur. It is the crucible which supports the turmoil of the social learning process.

Second, to maintain an egalitarian environment dedicated to a respect for difference, power must be continually problematized by the group, both from an external and internal perspective.

Third, Candora is a place where difference is taken into account, particularly from a multicultural perspective. Adult educators need to examine the processes that maintain a respect for difference within other such organizations within associational life.

Fourth, the leader, or coordinator in Candora's case, plays a critical role in establishing and fostering an environment conducive to building collectivity and learning about self and community. A continual questioning of her own assumptions and motives must occur.

Fifth, as a space for democracy, the skills that are learned in Candora will affect the institutions within civil society. As an alternative organization, its existence influences community institutions, family life and how people congregate. This research did not extend itself beyond those currently involved in Candora to look at the contributions that former members were making to their community and the impact that they were having on the institutions within civil society. This would provide some idea as to the long term impact of social learning.

Sixth, this thesis touched on the barriers to women's involvement as citizens within society, but this is certainly an area that needs to be explored. If critical adult educators are to have a clearer understanding of social learning within civil society, then it is imperative that an understanding of the complexity of the barriers that exist for all those involved in social learning be fully investigated.

Conclusion

This thesis has attempted to illuminate the connections between critical adult education and the defense of civil society. The Candora example, despite its ties to the political and economic systems and therefore, its tenuousness as a truly voluntary association, suggests the potential that social learning processes have in countering the encroachments by the political and economic systems into the lifeworld. It demonstrates the power of the collective in constructing a reality consistent with those involved in Candora, a solidarity, and in the processes of learning and action to overcome the difficulties that the women experience in patriarchal and hegemonic systems. Although Candora is one small organization, its participatory democratic nature and the democratic capacities that are born out of that have a definite impact on the lives of the women involved. Through them, democracy is spread to their partners, their families, their other voluntary involvements and their community. As such, the institutions within civil society are either reinforced with or opened up to an appreciation of a more democratic and egalitarian world. The findings in this research have only touched the tip of the iceberg of social learning, and it is imperative that further research be carried out in other such situations in order to gain a full and rich understanding of the contexts, conditions, processes and issues that are involved. Only then will critical adult educators hope to contribute to preserving, maintaining and expanding the spaces for democracy within civil society.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

Thesis Title:	Spaces for Democracy: Social Learning Within A Women's Collective
Researcher:	Margo Schmitt-Boshnick Department of Educational Policy Studies Faculty of Education University of Alberta

This is to certify that I agree to participate in the above study. Having been contacted by the researcher, a graduate student in the Department of Educational Policy Studies, I understand that:

1. The purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of social learning processes.
2. My name will not be disclosed at any time during this study or used in the resulting thesis and subsequent articles or presentations.
3. Any information I provide to the researcher will be kept confidential and used solely for the purposes of this research study.
4. I am participating in this study on a purely voluntary basis. Therefore, I have the right to quit or refuse to participate at any time.
5. The results of the study will be made available to me if I so request.
6. I have been fully informed as to the nature of the study and my involvement in it.
7. The thesis this study leads to will be available for examination at the University of Alberta library.

Signature of Participant___________________________

Date________________

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW GUIDE

First Interview

1. How did you come to be involved in Candora?

2. Did you know about Candora before becoming part of the PACE program? If so, how?

3. Have you been involved in other programs, such as pre-employment, training, etc? Tell me about those programs.

4. In what ways is this program different from other programs that you have been involved in?
    - What things do you do that are different?
    - Do you interact with the staff and other participants differently? If so, how?

5. Have you been involved in the community in which you live before? If so, how?

6. What has this program made you more aware of? Do you think differently about your life and the world around you? If so, how?

7. What have you learned while you have been in the program?
    - About yourself?
    - About the group?

8. Now that you have been involved in the program, if you reflect back on your life, or the community, what changes do you see in the way you see and do things?
    - How do you feel about yourself after being involved?

9. What types of things do you do that help you learn?
    - How is learning here different from other places or programs? - What does the group do that helps you learn?

10. Overall, how do you feel about your experiences at Candora?

Second Interview

1. You have talked about how Candora helped you, can you tell me more about this?
    - What did you do?
    - What did the group do?

2. What did you believe about yourself before Candora?
    - What do you believe about yourself now?
    - What caused you, or others who have had similar experiences to feel that way about yourself (themselves) before and after?

3. What did you believe about society before Candora?
    - What do you believe about it now?

4. What makes the women of Candora glad to be part of the organization?

5. You talked to others about your experience, then what did you do? What did talking stimulate you to do, if anything?

6. Explain why you think Candora is unique?
    - What is it that Candora does that is different from other organizations?

7. Tell me why having only women involved in Candora is important.

8. The women in the group have talked about feeling looked down upon because they are on welfare. What causes this to happen?
    - Has your experience at Candora changed this at all, and if so how?